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**From Cattle Range**

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**Cotton Patch**

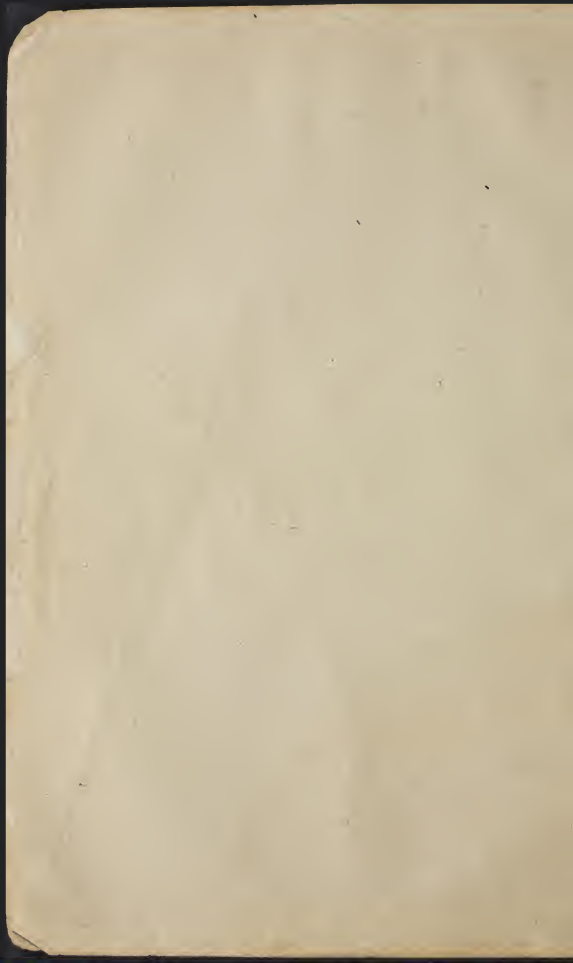


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From

# Cattle Range to Cotton Patch.

A Series of

## Historical Sketches

Dealing with the Industrial, Social and Commercial  
Evolutions that have Taken Place in Western Texas  
from the beginning of the Buffalo Slaughter  
to the Present. First Published in the  
Dallas-Galveston News.

By

DON. H. BIGGERS.

PRESS OF  
THE ABILENE PRINTING CO.,  
ABILENE, TEXAS

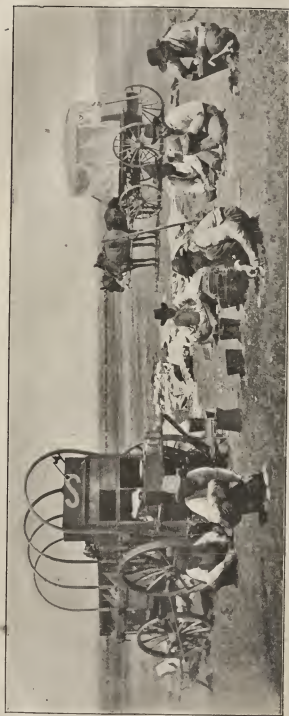
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Headquarters of one of the few big ranches left in Texas.



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Where grace was seldom said and a meal was always enjoyed.  
— Courtesy Farm and Ranch.



## WARNING.

In the preparation of these sketches I have endeavored to tell the truth. Of course this has been somewhat experimental with me, and the public will not expect as much as would be expected of one thoroughly versed in that rare art. The actual value of this book is perhaps about ten cents, but as honest effort should be properly rewarded the price is one dollar per copy, which leaves me a net profit of ninety cents with which to pay the cost of publication and compensate myself.

The information concerning the five frontier forts was obtained from Captain W. J. Maltby, than whom there is no living man more competent to give thoroughly accurate information. Captain Maltby was connected with the government service from 1847 to 1856, was with the expeditions that established Fort Phantom Hill and Fort Belknap, and was afterwards employed in various capacities at every frontier fort established in Texas previous to 1860. From 1852 to 1853 Captain Maltby was a special, in fact, the only guard, accompanying Albert Sidney Johnston, then paymaster in the regular army, on his visits to Forts Crogan, Phantom Hill, Belknap, Graham and Fort Worth. From 1856 to 1874 Captain Maltby served almost continuously with the State Rangers and perhaps did as much or more than any other man has ever done to effectually settle the Indian troubles in Texas. After the close of his services in this capacity he turned his attention to agriculture and fruit culture, and no man has done even comparatively as much in demonstrating what can be done in fruit culture in this country. A great pioneer in two respects—a pioneer Indian fighter and a pioneer demonstrator and developer.

The matter concerning the buffalo slaughter, the personal experiences and the early day cattle history have been compiled from information furnished by persons of unquestioned veracity from personal knowledge or from such records as were possibly available, though but little of the matter published herein is of record, and could be compiled only from the narratives of those associated with the events handled.

### SONG TO THE WEST.

Land of the West! Land of the West!  
Oh, let me live forever there!  
By tow'ring walls thou art not prest,  
Nor is the sick'ning stress of life—  
The struggle and eternal strife—  
Heard on thy plains so free and fair.

Land of the West! Land of the West!  
Land where the prairies boundless roll!  
Of all the world thou art the best,  
Though we may seek from pole to pole;  
For Nature here doth rule the whole,  
O'er valley vast and sunkiss'd crest.

Land of the West! Land of the West!  
Where winds of morning sprightly blow,  
And kiss the flow'rs on Nature's breast,  
By man thou still art not deprest;  
With thee Oh, may it long be so.  
Land of the West! Land of the West!

—MAT M. GLOVER.

## CHAPTER I.

### FIVE FRONTIER FORTS.

The annexation of Texas to the Union and the result of the Mexican War imposed upon the United States the responsibility of protecting the frontier of Texas, a task the enormity of which we of to-day can but faintly conceive. To afford effective protection the Government must patrol a line from the Red River to the Rio Grande, a distance of nearly seven hundred miles, and cope with the most cunning, daring, treacherous race known to man, a race cunning, daring and treacherous by instinct, training and environment, and made desperate by the usurpations of an aggrandizing race. West of this patrol line lay thousands of square miles of unknown, unexplored wilderness, the haunts of Indians, the range of buffaloes and mustangs, and the lair of every kind of wild animal known to this latitude. But the Indians were not the only hostile forces with which the Government must cope on the Texas frontier. From Corpus Christi to El Paso, a distance of nearly seven hundred miles, bands of Mexican outlaws, but little less cunning and barbarous than the Indians, rendezvoused on the Texas side of the Rio Grande River, depredated upon the Southern settlements at their pleasure, and returned to their American soil retreats to feast and revel in their own barbaric manner on the spoils of their raid, or, if apprehensive of pursuit and punishment, they could cross the river

and on their own soil be free from foreign molestation and in no danger of local arrest.

The Rio Grande border from Corpus Christi to El Paso added to the border line from Corpus Christi to the Red River, made a distance of more than twelve hundred miles over which the Federal Government must exercise military surveillance, and the soldiers engaged in this service must be properly maintained, and there was only one way to do this—establish forts along the frontier, where troops could be concentrated and commissaries maintained, from whence men and supplies could be dispatched, and to which reports of Indian depredations could be made.

In the spring of 1850 General Arbuckle, having headquarters at Fort Smith, Ark., directed that two forts be established in Texas, on or near the 32nd parallel. Accordingly, an outfit, consisting of about one hundred and fifty ox and mule teams, was fitted up, and accompanied by several companies of the Fifth Infantry, left Fort Smith on its Texas mission. The two forts were located, established and afterwards known as Fort Belknap and Fort Phantom Hill. The expedition reached Post No. 1, or Belknap, sometime in the month of November. Here one company of soldiers was stationed, and a few weeks later the balance of the expedition moved forward to locate and establish Post No. 2, afterwards known to fame as Fort Phantom Hill.

If there is anything of special interest or importance connected with the history of Fort Belknap, it is not known to the writer, therefore no further mention will be made of that place in this connection.

The expedition which left Post No. 1, to establish Post No. 2, was composed of one company of the Fifth Infantry, one hundred ox and mule teams, with Major Thomas as commander and Black Beaver as guide. The expedition followed Captain Marcy's Santa Fe trail, which lead west and just north of the Clear Fork of the Brazos. The third night after leaving Belknap the expedition struck camp at an ideal location for that purpose, in a large basin or valley skirted by hills and mountains. Here was an abundance of wood and water, plenty of grass for the animals, and excellent shelter for the men and animals, in the event of a norther. About daylight the next morning Major Thomas commanded the outfit to move forward, but just after he did so Black Beaver approached the Major and advised him to remain where he was, as there was certain to be a blizzard before many hours. Black Beaver knew the country, and as

the expedition was to follow the Marey trail but a few miles further, he knew they would be on a treeless, trackless prairie, and under such circumstances he knew what a howling blizzard meant; but it was a lovely morning; not a clond was to be seen; occasionally there was a gentle breeze from the south, and the temperature was more like spring than winter, so the Major placed no confidence in the old chief's ability as a weather fore-caster, but commanded him to move forward; and with no other protest than an appealing look and a sad shake of the head, Black Beaver turned and rode gloomily along his way, while closely behind him rode the Major in his magnificent carriage, drawn by two coal black, spirited, well-groomed horses, and behind the Major's carriage marched the soldiers. It was some time after the Major and the soldiers had departed before the quartermaster gave moving orders to the rest of the outfit, the Major having instructed him as to the hour when he should depart. The Major and his soldiers had taken up their march about daylight, and just after sunrise the big ox and mule teams, pulling their clumsy, heavily loaded wagons, went creeping across the valley, up the sloping hill and on into the prairie, where naught save a great expanse of level surface greeted the eye. The soldiers, having left considerably in advance of the commissary department, and traveling some faster than did the big teams, had passed out of sight, but the quartermaster and his men apprehended no difficulty in following the tracks of the soldiers and the Major's carriage, even after they had turned off the Marey trail, for the quartermaster had been instructed to leave the Marey trail at a certain point and then travel due west. But, alas! ere that point was reached the sunshine faded, a sombre shadow flashed across the prairie, black, rolling clouds obscured the sky, and from out of the north came the wild, pitiless winds, whirling before them blinding sheets of sleet and snow.

Black Beaver's prophecy was being fulfilled, and innocent men must suffer agonies because his warning had not been heeded.

It was but a few minutes after the storm broke until the tracks of the men in front could not be found, and even the deep cut Marey trail could scarcely be distinguished from any other place on the prairie. It was with great difficulty that the teams could be forced along, almost facing the blizzard, and it was but a short time until the wagons were scattered for considerable distance along the trail, each driver desperately endeavoring to keep as near as possible to the wagon in the lead of him, and

thus escape becoming hopelessly lost. The big ox teams had not fared so badly, owing to the fact that none of them had reached the prairie when the blizzard struck them, and after that they made no attempt to go any further that day, but, having their own bedding and provisions, went into camp where there was shelter and plenty of wood.

The quartermaster followed the Marcy trail until he reached what he thought was the point where he had been instructed to quit the trail and travel westward. After traveling some three or four miles the quartermaster found himself confronted by an impassable canyon, for, instead of going westward, he had mistaken his bearings and traveled south. There was but one thing to do. He must endeavor to retrace his own trail and return to the one he had just quitted. It was an almost impossible feat to make the teams turn about and face the blizzard and perfect fusillade of sleet, but at last the quartermaster, followed by the cannon, the caisson and the Major's baggage wagon, succeeded in again reaching the Marcy trail at a place where there was some mesquite timber, and the quartermaster remarked:

"For God's sake, boys, try to make a fire, for I believe we are freezing to death."

Taking an ax from the Major's baggage wagon, young Maltby and a man by the name of White began gathering wood, and soon had a little fire, but instead of waiting, the quartermaster had rode on into the storm, determined to overtake the Major. One or two more wagons came up, and the drivers would tumble from their saddles and hover over the little fire, while their teams would turn their faces from the blizzard and there stand, hovering, shivering, freezing. Presently, from away down the trail, a human voice faintly overcame the howling winds and the pattering sleet and found its way to the ears of young Maltby, who was endeavoring to gather a few more sticks of wood for the flickering fire. Dropping the axe, he gathered his lines and, by great effort, sent his six-mule team galloping down the trail in the direction from whence the hallooing came; and, after going a few hundred yards, he overtook the quartermaster, more dead than alive, but still clinging to his saddle, and desperately, determinedly riding on.

At last the quartermaster and the cannon driver found the Major and the soldiers camped—camped because the Major's horses had stopped and refused to go any further. This camp

was known as Camp Necessity, the Major saying it was a "military necessity" for him to camp there, because he could not go any further to select a more desirable camping place. Had the Major been able to go much further, to select "a more desirable" location, it would certainly have resulted in the death of the quartermaster, and probably several of the men under him. The soldiers had been able to gather enough wood to build several fires, around which they were hovering and trying to keep warm; but when the quartermaster reached the camp, he was unable to dismount, and had to be assisted from his horse; and it was only by heroic effort that his life was saved. He had performed a remarkable feat, riding for hours in one of the worst blizzards that ever swept across the prairies, and the wonder is that he survived to ever reach the camp. Twelve mules had fallen dead in their harness, and the drivers running beside their teams had almost perished.

Night was approaching, and the blizzard was unabated. For several miles back the route that had been traveled, men, half blinded by the cutting sleet and sifting snow, and benumbed by cold to the point of semi-consciousness, were desperately struggling against what seemed a terrible, inevitable fate. Now and then a wagon would be driven into camp, again some teamster would come in, riding his saddle mule, having abandoned his team and turned them loose to wander where they would. The drivers who had blankets or bedding of any kind had turned their teams loose, crawled into the wagons, wrapped their bedding around them and there remained until found by their comrades and piloted to the camp, the next day.

About 4 o'clock three teamsters rode into camp and reported that a young fellow by the name of James Moorhead, who had, like themselves, abandoned his team and started with them, had stopped along the way, and said they feared he would freeze unless rescued at once. Moorehead was from Missouri, and from the same State there was another member of the expedition, a rather delicate, but big-hearted, fearless young fellow, by the name of Billy Benton, who was a nephew of Senator Benton. There were no ties or relationship between Benton and Moorehead, except that they were barely acquainted, were from the same State, and were fellow-beings in the hour of peril. Upon hearing the report of the three teamsters, Benton went to the wagonmaster and said:

"Mr. Locklin, if you will let me have your horse, I will go back and try to find Moorehead and get him to camp."

The wagonmaster granted Benton's request, but earnestly advised him against the undertaking. Every man in the camp liked Benton, and many of them appealed to him to not go, for to ride back into that storm for a distance of four or five miles was a task seemingly too great for an iron constitution; and for a delicate boy, who had already suffered as Benton had during the day, to attempt it seemed nothing less than desperate folly; but Benton simply remarked that Moorehead should not freeze to death on that God-forsaken prairie if he could prevent it, and rode away. Just before dark Benton returned to camp and reported that he had found Moorehead some five miles back on the trail, sitting down, but speechless; that he had done everything within his power to bring him to camp, but that he could not put him on the horse, and the poor fellow, being unconscious, was entirely helpless. Mr. Locklin called for volunteers to go after Moorehead, and three men, Maltby, William Kempner and William Luce responded to the call. Three mules that had not wandered far from the camp were caught and hitched to an empty wagon, in which was placed a kettle of good solid coals, a bottle of brandy was procured from the doctor, Locklin and Luce got in the wagon, Kemper mounted the saddle mule, Maltby took the lead mule by the bridle, and the team was led and urged back into the storm, out into the miserable night, and along the never-to-be-forgotten trail they had traversed during the day. When the relief party reached the spot designated by Benton, Moorehead was found. He was sitting down no longer but was lying on his back, and as if to protect him from the fury of the winds the sleet and snow had drifted about him and half-way covered his body from the howling blasts. The wagonmaster ran his hand under Moorehead's shirt bosom and, after a moment's pause, remarked, "Boys, his heart is still," and still it was—still forever. Some brandy was poured down the lifeless man, and he was tenderly placed in the wagon with his feet to the kettle of coals, and about midnight the party succeeded in reaching camp, weighted down with sorrow, hungry and cold.

The next morning was clear and the wind had calmed. The mules had been turned loose as fast as they reached camp the evening before, only a few saddle horses having been kept tied to the wagons. Some of the men mounted these horses, and oth-



ers went on foot, and they began scouring the country to recover the scattered mules, and by ten o'clock most of those that had lived through the storm were brought into camp, harnessed, and started back the trail to bring in the wagons, that had been left or lost during the storm, and by night the entire outfit, including the big ox teams, was once more united and camped in the same vicinity.

Early the next morning the body of Moorehead was buried, and to keep the coyotes from digging it up rocks were piled upon and all around the grave. After the burial of Moorehead, what teams had been recovered were hitched up, and Camp Necessity was forever abandoned. Its history properly belongs to the history of Fort Phantom Hill, and is the only really thrilling incident in the history of that far-famed fort.

About noon the expedition reached the Clear Fork, and found a good, natural crossing, as a result of Black Beaver's familiarity with the country, and his remarkable skill in guiding the expedition through a blinding blizzard and following his route as accurately as he could have done under the most favorable circumstances.

#### FORT PHANTOM HILL.

Romancers have made Fort Phantom Hill famous. They have woven fantastic stories about its weird name, and have made ghosts walk among its ruins. It has been the subject of endless controversies and numberless conflicting statements. In fact, more has been written and said and fewer facts related about Fort Phantom Hill than about any other Federal fort ever established on Texas soil. Shorn of fiction and reduced to simple truth, the story of Phantom Hill is the simple story of a Federal post, five hundred miles from the outskirts of civilization. It was the lonely, isolated index of the irresistible, onward march of civilization, and the desperate, thwarting efforts of a savage, dying race.

Fort Phantom Hill was established by Major Thomas, afterwards famous as a Federal General during the Civil War, and was first selected and occupied as the site for a Government post the latter part of December, 1850. It derived its name, about which there has been so much controversy, as the result of a mirage, or optical illusion. After the expedition had crossed the Clear Fork and reached the top of the hills skirting that stream, a considerable elevation or hill, seemingly covered with large trees, was sighted, and was apparently about one mile to

the southwest. To this point the expedition was guided, but the nearer it was approached, the more evident the deception became. The big hill became a small rise in the surface, and the trees assumed their natural proportions—a lot of post oak and blackjack shrubs and saplings. When the Major reached the place, he, together with his officers and Black Beaver, walked all over it and carefully viewed the surrounding country, after which they returned to where the men were, and the Major remarked to them:

“Here we will locate Fort Phantom Hill, for this is certainly one place where distance lends enchantment to the view.”

Black Beaver was thoroughly familiar with the country, he and his tribe having trapped and hunted a great deal along the Clear Fork and other streams in Western Texas, and he had been entrusted to guide the expeditions to the most desirable places for the location of the two Texas posts; and Captain Maltby, who has visited every fort in Texas, and many in other sections of the country, says that the old Indian’s judgment in regard to Fort Phantom Hill could not have been excelled, the conditions at that time being considered. For offensive and defensive purposes it was an ideal location; but in addition to this there was a sufficient amount of timber and an abundance of building stone near by. The Clear Fork afforded a convenient and inexhaustible supply of water, and from this stream it was no trouble to supply the fort with fish at any time. On the prairies were great herds of antelope, and in the roughs nearby were thousands of fat deer and turkeys. They had never heard the report of a gun, and had no fear of man, but were as gentle as domesticated animals, and all the men had to do when they wanted fresh meat was to shoot a deer or antelope, or take a stick and, after dark, go to some turkey roost and knock them off the limbs; and, as Captain Maltby has said, “Who can blame the Indian for fighting for this paradise when civilization sought to take it from him?”

There is nothing important or interesting in connection with Phantom as a point from which any Indian campaigns were made, in so far as the writer has been able to learn, and he has sought such information from every source reasonably available.

Now, in regard to a few controverted points, as to who commanded at Fort Phantom Hill, and as to what finally became of the place:

In 1851, Colonel Abercrombie was placed in command of Fort Phantom Hill, and was probably succeeded by Robert E. Lee, then a lieutenant-Colonel. Lee was perhaps in command of the place for a very short time only; but that he did command, there is an incontrovertible fact, but as to his having had his family there, having lost and buried a daughter whose remains are still there, etc., that is fiction of the most fictitious character. In the latter part of 1852 or the early part of 1853 the Government fitted out an expedition of forty-six mule teams, and loaded the wagons with supplies in the town of Austin. The supplies were to be delivered to Fort Phantom Hill, and the same expedition had orders to then move Lieutenant-Colonel Lee with five companies of the Fifth Infantry to Fort McIntosh, on the Rio Grande River. Captain Maltby was with this expedition, as a carpenter, and has frequently related and published the facts as here given. The expedition was several weeks on the road, being delayed by heavy rains, bad roads and swollen streams. At Fort Ewell, on the Nueces River, and about thirty-five miles from Fort McIntosh, the outfit was delayed three weeks on account of high water. There was a ferry boat at that place, but the river was so badly out of its banks that the teams and wagons could not be gotten to the boat; but as the stream subsided, the wagons were driven as near the banks of the river as possible, as big loads as the boat would carry through the shallow water would be loaded on to it and ferried across.

In 1861, just after the secession convention, the State Rangers were directed to demand the surrender of all Federal troops, and the abandonment of all Federal forts in Texas, the instructions being that the rangers should molest nothing belonging to the Government, and should in no way take charge of the posts or do damage to the buildings, as the State was merely acting from a precautionary standpoint, for in the event of war, which was then almost a certainty, it would be dangerous for Federal troops to be stationed, armed and equipped, within the borders of the State, and prepared to comply promptly with an order to concentrate and begin a campaign against the Confederate forces. A body of Texas Rangers under Colonel Buck Barry proceeded to Fort Phantom Hill, which place was surrendered to him without a fight. After the fort had surrendered, the soldiers and rangers went some distance and camped separately for the night. During the night the buildings were observed to be on fire, from what cause no one knows. The rangers claimed

that some of the Federal troops slipped back and did it, and the soldiers made the same charges against the rangers. Others claim that the Indians did the devilment, and the latter contention is the most plausible and is perhaps correct.

#### CAMP COOPER.

Camp Cooper was situated on the Clear Fork, and was about midway between Phantom Hill and Belknap. Few people of today ever heard of Camp Cooper, but in the latter 50's few people did not hear of it every few days, for then there was not a place more cordially hated and universally unpopular among the people of Texas, especially the people living along the frontier.

Camp Cooper was never a military post, in the strict sense of the word, but an Indian reservation. About 1851 the Government got possession of a considerable body of land in that vicinity, and began making extensive preparations to establish a great Indian reservation at Camp Cooper, where "the noble red men" could be trained in the arts of agriculture. A great deal of land was plowed, and the work seemed to be progressing rapidly when the Government, for reasons unknown, left the place, not having placed a single Indian upon it. In 1852 or 1853 a party by the name of Shell or Snell made an individual treaty with the Kiowa and Northern Comanche Indians, and established quite a trading post at Camp Cooper. Things went well with Mr. Shell, or Snell, for some weeks; but the Indians finally got some of their peculiar ideas in their heads and, possibly, some of Mr. Shell's, or Snell's, peculiar intoxicants in their stomachs, and then, to utilize a little modern parlance, there was "a rough house." Mr. Shell, or Snell, retired from the management of his earthly affairs, and the Indians returned to their haunts beyond the Red River.

Sometime later, though it is not known in what year, the Government again took charge of Camp Cooper, and made of it a reservation on which was placed the Southern Comanche, or Peneoca Indians. It would have been impossible for the Government to have selected a tribe that would have been more complete failures in the agricultural business, or a greater success as doers of devilment. Bands of them would quit the reservation when they liked, and go as far south as the Rio Grande; robbing, plundering, stealing and murdering to their hearts' content, and then, returning to the reservation, traveling in a hurry if pressed by the settlers or minute men; if not, then leisurely and joyfully. Naturally the people, especially those who had suffered

from past raids or were exposed to future depredations, were dissatisfied with this state of affairs. They protested. They supplicated. They even went so far in the matter as to ask the Federal authorities to do something; to either keep the Indians confined to the reservation, or turn them loose and give the people an opportunity to teach them something more practical than anything they would ever learn on an agricultural reservation. If the Federal authorities ever heard any of these protests, supplications or appeals, they never indicated it by their actions.

Forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and self-preservation required the application of a heroic treatment. The settlers got together, organized a kind of volunteer company, and selected General John R. Baylor as commander. The object of this company was to attack Camp Cooper and annihilate the whole Comanche tribe on that reservation. There were about two hundred and fifty men in the expedition, and they reached Camp Cooper some time in the month of June, 1859. But their plans miscarried. Instead of being able to take the place by surprise, the troops had been advised of their coming, and were in readiness for them. A fight took place, but the soldiers were too well equipped for the poorly-armed, undisciplined citizens, who were compelled to retire, after some of their number had been killed and others wounded, but not until they had killed at least a few of the Indians. This affair impressed upon the minds of the Federal authorities the fact that the people of Texas were desperately in earnest, and soon after this incident the Indians were moved to Fort Bliss, or Fort Sill, in the Indian Territory. About the only difference this made was in the fact that the Indians had to go and come a little further to do their mischief, and unless the citizens could come upon them before they recrossed the Red River, there was no possibility of inflicting punishment.

In this connection it may not be amiss to mention another matter not generally known to the people of to-day. There was a great deal of sentimental nonsense about how to handle the Indians, and the Quakers were the foremost advocates of the "be humane and merciful" theory. Through some influence a great many Quakers were appointed to the positions of Indian agents, hence in those days the term "Quaker Agents" was applied to Indian agents in general. But, regardless of creeds or pretensions, a majority of the Indian agents were either incompetent or dishonest. By anything like common-sense management the

Indians could have been kept confined to their reservations, or at least not permitted to go far enough from them to do any considerable mischief. An incompetent agent didn't know how to handle the Indians, and a dishonest one didn't want to, for mercenary reasons; his share of the spoils were more to him than the welfare of the Indian, or the property and lives of the frontiersmen and their families.

After moving the Indians to the Territory, the Government permanently abandoned Camp Cooper.

#### CAMP COLORADO.

Camp Colorado was located on the Jim Ned, in Coleman County, about twelve miles east of the present town of Coleman, and was established in the summer of 1856 by Major Earl Van Dorn. Here the Government erected quite a number of stone and wooden buildings, most of them still standing. About the most noteworthy event in connection with the history of Camp Colorado is the fact that it was here that Albert Sidney Johnston assembled the forces that were to make the famous expedition into Utah to quell the Mormon Revolution then in prospect. This was in 1858.

There were a few settlers in the vicinity of Camp Colorado, and, in so far as the material results are concerned, the best purpose it ever served was to give these settlers a good market for their poultry, beef and such produce as was raised in that section at that time.

Fort Chadbourne and Fort Griffin are properly within the province of these sketches, but at present very little is known, or, if known, is not obtainable, in regard to Fort Chadbourne. It was established in 1853, and like the other old forts, was surrendered to the State Rangers at the beginning of the Civil War, and was never again occupied by the Federal Government. Fort Griffin was established as a Government post about 1867, and was abandoned as such ten years later. It was famous mostly as a cattle town and buffalo hunters' supply and trading station, and is treated as such in a subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER II.

### BEGINNING OF THE BUFFALO SLAUGHTER.

The purport of these sketches is to treat of the industrial, commercial and social evolutions that have taken place in Western Texas during a period of about thirty-four years, and as the buffalo hunters preceded all other classes, a few Federal troops excepted, it is essential that this class of pioneers, if such they may be termed, and their romantic, tragic, transitory occupation be given at least a brief precedence in the treatment of this subject. When the slaughter ended many of the old buffalo hunters engaged in various kinds of business within the confines of the old buffalo range, and then became permanently identified with the country as pioneer citizens.

As early as 1870 the Government stage route was a noted public highway running somewhat diagonally across the State, via the Government posts of Fort Griffin, Fort Chadbourne, Fort Concho, thence nearly due west via Fort Stockton, Fort Hancock and El Paso. At that time lying west and north of this stage route was a great scope of country, virtually unexplored and concerning the topography and character of which scarcely anything was known. A few Federal troops had ventured into certain portions of this wilderness. Some of them found more Indians than they were looking for, which probably accounts for the fact that they were never again heard from, conse-

quently no reports are now extant as to the portion of country they traversed. As a result of discretion others were more fortunate, and the archives of the War Department now contain some valuable information in regard to the geography of this then wild country, this information being embodied in the reports of the officers in charge of the expeditions, showing the distance and directions traveled and the section of country covered. These reports are amusing, though a little inaccurate and slightly misleading. I have just been perusing one of them, from which I glean the following information:

That the Llano Estacado, or great American desert, extended from Fort Griffin to Sundown; that the Colorado River was somewhere between the Brazos and the Rocky Mountains; that the sandhills were at least 200 miles east of where they are; that the Yellow House Canyon emptied into the Pecos, whereas it is now notoriously a tributary of the Brazos. From all of which I infer that the officer making the report was wrong as to locations or that the country has since undergone a wonderful geographical transformation. But after more carefully examining the report I have come to the uncharitable conclusion that the officer making it never got so far away from the Government post that he could not yell for help and be distinctly understood, and that he did most of his topographical surveying with a field glass, and a vivid imagination, and his sagacity was commendable, for he was able to return alive and make a report for the amusement of future generations, whereas the fellow who ventured too far along the meanderings of some Indian trail never got back to make any kind of report, to say nothing of the distress and anxiety the unknownness of his whereabouts caused his friends, relatives and the War Department.

It is of this section of country that these sketches treat. As to humor of the absurd character, I do not pretend to compete with the 1870 report of the army officers, but as I have an advantage over them in the matter of metes, bounds and landmarks, I do claim that my work is far superior to their work in point of accuracy, therefore preferable as a guide and for general reference purposes.

Properly speaking, the buffalo slaughter began in 1870 and virtually terminated in 1877. Previous to 1870, however, a considerable number of persons, especially in Kansas, Nebraska and some portions of Texas, engaged in buffalo hunting as a regular business, the choicest flesh of the animals thus killed being



sold at the Government posts or peddled in the older communities, but the hides, having no market value, were for the most part thrown away.

The Indian was unquestionably the first individual to kill a buffalo, but with his characteristic carelessness in such important matters, he failed to leave to posterity any record of the event. It is best for the Indian's general reputation and social standing that he omitted to chronicle, by pen or legend, most of his early day doings, but there are exceptions.

The history of the Indian and the buffalo are inseparably linked, a fact that has militated considerably against the buffalo, but he couldn't help it. He was an unconsenting party to the alliance and the innocent victim of circumstantial evidence. The really regrettable feature of the incident is that it was the buffaloes that got exterminated. Nature intended the buffalo for a wild, nomadic life, to fill a sphere not in demand for any other purpose at that particular time. I have not made a very close study of the Indian question, and am not in a position to hazard a surmise as to what kind of scheme nature was working out when the Indian was conceived. I have never even heard a rumor upon which to base a conclusion, but neither the Indian nor the buffalo were intended for civilization or endowed with natures that could be domesticated. While in sentimental moods we deplore the destruction of the buffaloes, yet there is no denying the fact that it was the only fate that awaited them. No efforts of man could have domesticated them, for they simply wouldn't domesticate. I have never yet seen a gentle buffalo. Col. Charles Goodnight has quite a herd of buffaloes on his ranch in the Panhandle. Nearly every one of them has been born and reared in his buffalo park and he has handled them more carefully and kindly than he has his common cattle. An incident will illustrate how gentle and domesticated these buffaloes are. I was up at the Colonel's a few years ago and concluded one morning that I would stroll around over the park, and take a look at the buffaloes, but the Colonel overtook me just as I was scaling the last strand of a ten-foot barbed wire fence, and casually remarked:

"Where are you going?"

"Thought I'd take a stroll in the Park and look at the buffaloes."

"If you will wait a few minutes I will have the buggy hitched up and haul you out there."

"Oh, never mind, Colonel. I don't want to put you to so much trouble."

"It won't be nearly as much trouble to haul you out there as it would be to haul you back, dig a grave, go after the coroner, telegraph your folks and hold an inquest."

Had the old-timers taken advantage of opportunities there might now have been hundreds of parks throughout the country filled with buffaloes, as is the case with Colonel Goodnight, but as to domesticating them, to be handled as cattle are handled, either in pastures or on the open range, it was an impossibility.

Until disturbed by the advent of civilization armed, as civilization generally is, with a long range gun, the bulk of buffaloes ranged on the plains or open country lying east of the Rocky Mountings, 200 or 300 miles in width and extending across the United States, but when the slaughter began thousands of them drifted from their old feeding grounds into the mountain regions of the Northwest and into the Dominion of Canada, and it was in those sections in the early eighties that the last buffaloes were killed and the last Indian tribes conquered, that is, if putting Indians on reservations and sending scouts and regiments of soldiers out occasionally to ascertain what section of country had been scalped last, was really conquering the Indian. However, nothing more completely crushed the resisting power or humbled the hostile spirit of the Indians than did the extermination of the buffaloes. It was the Western Indians' national calamity, for it deprived them of a source of independent subsistence—took away their bread, meat, wearing apparel and building material. Then the Indian capitulated with the stipulation that he should have the best of the transaction, and that he and his should be supplied with an abundance of pure air, a few blankets, a mess of tough steak now and then, suspenders, collar buttons, colleges, agricultural experiment stations for the benefit of the squaws who already had some knowledge of farming; in consideration of which the Indian agreed to behave himself when he felt so inclined and when not otherwise engaged to loaf around and help the Indian agent do nothing. In most respects both the whites and the Indians have complied with the terms of these treaties.

I am sorry that I got off on the Indian question, for I generally get off when I tackle that subject, but I have personal reasons for not liking an Indian, and avail myself of every possible opportunity to make it known. I never harmed an Indian

in my life. In fact I walked 175 miles once to keep from having trouble with a bunch of the devils. My horse was recovered later and I was told that the Indians were friendly Tonkawas, but that didn't make any difference. I had as soon be scalped as scared to death. If they wanted to trade horses with me they should have surrounded me instead of my horse, thus giving me several yards the start, for when a fellow once gets started under such circumstances he is liable to get under the influence of an irrepressible momentum.

In the early part of 1870 J. Wright Mooar, now a prominent ranchman in Scurry County, landed at Fort Hays, on the Santa Fe Railway, in the western part of Kansas. A few weeks later Mooar obtained a contract to supply the Government post with wood, and while camped on Walnut, about fourteen miles south of Fort Hays, he became acquainted with James White, afterward one of the most noted buffalo hunters, but who, together with his entire outfit of men, was murdered by the Indians near Miles City, Mont., in 1877. White was then killing buffaloes and selling the meat in Fort Hays, but throwing the hides away. Mooar, who until a few months previously had resided in New York City, told White that he believed the hides would find a ready market there and suggested that they test the matter. White agreed to the proposition, a partnership was formed and a few weeks later twenty-one hides were shipped to New York, being consigned to John W. Mooar, a brother of J. Wright Mooar. No market could be found for the hides in New York, but a couple of Pennsylvania tanners finally gave \$3.50 each for the hides for experimental purposes. A short time afterward the tanners announced to Mr. Mooar that the experiment had been satisfactory and that they were in the market for 2,000 hides. Mooar Brothers & White took the contract to supply the hides, and thus the first killing of buffaloes for their hides was inaugurated on a considerable scale.

Other tanners entered the market for buffalo hides, and it was but a few months until orders were received for 10,000 hides from England, and the slaughter was commenced extensively, several big outfits entering the field. One of the most serious problems confronting the first buffalo hunters was the lack of a gun that would do proper execution. John W. Mooar, now a citizen of Colorado, Texas, wrote to the factory, setting forth the kind of work to be done, and asked if a specially designed gun could not be made. After some correspond-

ence the factory agreed, for the sum of \$150, to make a model. The result was the "big fifty," which proved a success. Later the Sharpe's 44 was introduced and became a great favorite with buffalo hunters.

During the greater portion of the year 1871 buffalo hunting was confined to Western Kansas. By 1872, the bulk of buffaloes had drifted, or rather been pressed, into the country south of the Cimarron River. Hither they were followed by the hunters, and the first big buffalo killing camp was established on Texas soil in the latter part of 1871, this camp being on the north side of the Canadian. The hunters were soon forced to abandon this territory, however, owing to the hostilities of the Kiowa, Cheyenne, Comanche and Arapahoe Indians. Up to this time there had been no serious trouble between the hunters and Indians, but the Adobe Walls fight started a war that lasted several months, during which time the hunters had to keep out of the Panhandle country, and No Man's Land. So they gave the Government and the Indians permission to chase and shoot at each other in that section while they took a thousand miles roundabout and entered Texas at a less exposed point, and thus the buffalo slaughter is, in brief, brought into Western Texas, for though the killing of buffaloes for their hides began and continued for more than a year on Kansas soil, Texas was destined to be the field of greatest operations, especially that part of the State south of the Canadian River.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE SLAUGHTER AND BONE BOOM IN TEXAS.

After the Indian outbreak in the Panhandle and No Man's Land, the buffalo hunters retired from those sections, the southwestern part of Kansas and what is now Oklahoma, most of them going to Fort Dodge, which had already superseded Fort Hays as the market and trading point of the buffalo hunters. The question with them now was to find a hunting country where the hides could be gotten to market and operations continued. It was well known that buffaloes were plentiful on the prairies of Western Texas, but to reach this section it was necessary to travel more than 500 miles by the most direct route, through an unknown country, a considerable part of it infested by bands of marauding Indians. Eight to ten miles per day was the limit distance that could be covered by the big ox teams of the buffalo hunters, and to travel a distance of 500 miles under such circumstances, having no positive destination and to probably find the hunting grounds too far from a railroad point where the hides could be marketed and supplies obtained, would have been a foolish, desperate venture. It was therefore necessary to investigate before making the move, and to make the investigation necessarily involved great danger and uncertain results.

James White, Mike O'Brien and two young men whose names are not now obtainable, left Fort Dodge in January,

1873, for the purpose of locating new hunting grounds and reporting to their companions at Fort Dodge. With a team of good mules, plenty of ammunition and all supplies necessary for such a trip, they started on their mission. They did not cross the country by the most direct route, but went from Fort Dodge to Denison, then west to Fort Griffin, the distance traveled by this route being more than 1,000 miles. From Fort Griffin they made a several weeks' tour of the country, and reported to Moear Brothers that it was only about 250 miles from Denison to Fort Griffin, and 100 miles from Fort Griffin to the heart of the buffalo range, and that Fort Griffin, a Government post situated convenient to the hunting grounds, would doubtless soon become a great supply distributing and hide-buying point.

Immediately upon receipt of the report from White and O'Brien, Moear Brothers started for Fort Griffin, having with them their own outfits and the outfits of the hunters already in Texas. Their intention was to travel directly across the country to Fort Griffin, but upon reaching the Cheyenne agency they discovered a very undesirable condition of affairs. Quite a battle had taken place between the soldiers and Indians, as a result of which fifteen soldiers had been killed or wounded, and more than a hundred Indians had been transported to the confines of the hereafter. The Indians, though greatly outnumbering the soldiers, had been badly worsted in the assault and had dug rifle pits and intrenched themselves in the sandhills and apparently prepared to lay siege to the place, but after two nights of this kind of inactivity, not suited to the Indians' restless disposition, they evacuated the locality and started on a raid to the south.

The hunters did not deem it prudent to attempt to go on direct to Fort Griffin, as they knew a great deal about Indians and nothing at all about the country to be traveled, so they went east to Fort Sill, thinking a company of soldiers might soon be sent from that place to Fort Griffin, which would enable them to find the way without difficulty or hazardous risk. After spending more than a week at Fort Sill and seeing no prospects for an early departure of soldiers for Fort Griffin, the hunters decided to reach that place by way of Denison, which they did after having spent more than three months on the road.

The hunters first pitched their camp near Black Holes, in Haskell County, but not a great many buffaloes were killed in that vicinity, and a few days later the camp was moved to Miller Creek, then to the head of Lake Creek, and soon thereafter to

Big Lake, where a permanent winter camp was established near the line of Haskell and Knox counties, and in the adjacent territory during that winter occurred the first big buffalo killing in Texas, 2,000 buffaloes being killed and several thousand pounds of meat cured.

Early the following spring the hunters sent 2,000 hides to Denison, most of the meat they had cured being disposed of in Fort Griffin. The hide train was composed five big ox teams, each drawing two wagons, and on each wagon was 200 hides. The stage drivers from Fort Griffin to Denison scattered along the route the news that several buffalo hunters were on their way to Denison with a herd of bull teams, hauling stacks of hides as high as mountains. Bull teams were not novelties in those days, but such thing as a big outfit loaded with buffalo hides had never passed down the road, and the advertised event of an overland circus never aroused more enthusiastic curiosity. Wherever the road passed close to a house, which was not frequent in those days, especially along the Fort Griffin and Denison road, the children and old folks viewed the hide train with wonderment, and the dogs, accustomed to making vicious assaults upon all classes of passers, not being able to understand what the thunder this new-fangled, strangely-odored outfit meant, generally intrenched themselves under the house where they could better protect the premises.

When the hide train finally reached Denison the hide buyers there were found wholly unprepared to deal with the situation. They didn't know how to classify such hides, nor were they familiar with the market prices, having never handled such produce. But they had been telegraphing for information, and when the train drove into town they inspected the hides, caucused, looked wise and finally made bids, mostly remarkable because they were uniformly the same. The bids were so ridiculously low that they were declined, and Mooar sold them by telegraph to a well-known firm of hide buyers in Leavenworth, Kansas.

Thus the first big lot of buffalo hides ever sold in Texas was sold by telegraph to parties in Leavenworth, but every dollar received for them was spent in Denison for clothing, guns, ammunition and provisions.

During 1874 quite a number of buffalo hunters ventured into the Texas buffalo range, among them being George Causey, who had previously operated on a small scale in the Fort Dodge country, and before the slaughter had ended he was one of the

most noted men on the buffalo range and had perhaps the biggest outfit of the kind that ever operated in the United States. During the winter of 1876-7 his outfit, then operating in the Yellow Horse Canyon country, skinned 7,500 buffaloes and cured more than one hundred thousand pounds of meat. I think it was in 1874 that Sam Carr came into Texas buffalo notoriety. Carr was reputed to be the greatest individual hunter on the range, it being an easy matter for him to kill and skin thirty-five or forty buffaloes per day and haul the hides into camp. The secret of Carr's success was in his marvelous skill as a skinner. During 1874-5 Charley Rath and several other supply traders who had been operating in Kansas came into Texas, where the hunters had become sufficiently numerous to support supply stations, or camps, as they were called. Fort Griffin was the principal hide buying and supply distributing point after 1874, but the supply camps constituted an interesting and important feature of the buffalo country.

During 1875 hunters began to pour into the buffalo range from all parts of the country, and from that time it would be impossible to follow the operations of all the hunting outfits. It was in 1876, however, that the rush to the buffalo range reached its climax. Merchants in all parts of the State grubstaked men to kill buffaloes, and every man who could raise a wagon and team, a few bedclothes, cooking utensils, a few provisions, a gun and some ammunition, turned himself loose on his own responsibility, and the big outfits, realizing the result of this pernicious assault, doubled their efforts, and soon but few buffaloes roamed the range, and the hunters' guns were silent.

As a commercial proposition, the world has never known a waste of game equal to that of the buffalo slaughter, though thousands of dollars were realized from the flesh, hides and bones, millions of dollars worth of meat and hides were totally wasted, the bones alone being marketed without waste or depreciation. Not even a reasonable estimate can be made as to the amount that was realized from the sale of buffalo meat, hides and bones, the statistics available scarcely giving a faint conception as to this matter. About 1871 the packers came to realize the superiority of buffalo meat, and this led to its immediate introduction and universal popularity as a food. During 1872-3 hundreds of car loads of buffalo meat were shipped from Dodge to Kansas City, Chicago and other packing points, and thousands of pounds were sold to the Government posts and



throughout the country, and of course this feature of the slaughter grew in proportion as the slaughter progressed and the hunters multiplied. The tallow was of an inferior quality and never commanded a very good price. The hides made a poor quality of leather, and owing to the overproduction, depreciated in price, the average price for hides during the slaughter being about \$1 each, while the meat sold at from 2 1-2c to 3c per pound. The humps, or saddles, hams and tongues was the only kind of meat the hunters preserved, and countless thousands of buffaloes were killed for their hides only, and from their carcasses not a pound of meat was taken, but as a buffalo in good flesh would yield about four hundred pounds of marketable meat, his gross value was about \$11.

There is no way of approximating the number of buffaloes in the United States when the slaughter began, and there were not enough of them left when it ended to justify a calculation. The records show that more than 3,500,000 hides were marketed, but these records by no means show the total number of hides sold, to say nothing of the thousands of buffaloes that were wantonly slaughtered but never skinned.

I asked an old buffalo hunter, noted as a very conservative man, how many buffalo he thought there were when the slaughter began. He said he had never made but one estimate, and that under circumstances where a slight error was possible. He said that one night a big herd stampeded and ran over his tent and other camping utensils, and that during the prolonged process he calculated that there were at least two billion in that bunch, and that there were probably a hundred thousand bunches of the same size scattered over the range throughout the country. I asked him how he kept from being trampled upon during the passing of the stampeded herd, and he said that he had never heard of a buffalo climbing a cottonwood tree, and he had never heard of a buffalo hunter failing to climb one if it was available when the earth began to tremble and hoofs began to clatter two or three miles away and a thunderous sound rolled through the air. I inferred from this that he heard the buffaloes coming, and went out and climbed a cottonwood tree, probably not taking time to reflect that during his absence everything in his camp would be ruined and trampled into the earth. I didn't ask him whether this occurred away out on the lonesome prairie where there were no trees of any kind, or whether it was near some creek where there were plenty of them. Sometimes it isn't a good idea to ask too many immaterial questions.

After the buffaloes had been exterminated and the hunters had long since returned from the fields of carnage, millions of bleaching bones remained as the silent testimony of an unequal conflict. They spoke of a slaughter unparalleled in the history of wild animals; they recalled the rule and glory of the Indian, his savagery, his midnight raids, his treacheries and his fall, and the extermination of his common heritage. These bones represented the obliteration of civilization's last barrier in its westward march on the American Continent, they told a story of hardships, suffering and endurance seldom equaled in the wild struggles for wealth. But when railroads were built across the country, affording shipping facilities, these reminders were converted into channels more profitable, though less sentimental. As these bones made an excellent quality of fertilizer, they readily commanded as high as twelve dollars per ton.

The first bones shipped from the old buffalo range went from Abilene to New Orleans, the shipment being made in the latter part of 1880. Soon after this shipment bone haulers flocked into all parts of the bone country and it was not long until thousands of tons of bones were being shipped from every station along the lines of railroads penetrating the old buffalo range, Colorado, Sweetwater, Abilene, Baird and Albany being the principal shipping points in Western Texas. The bone-hauling business lasted nearly two years, and during that time the total shipments amounted to more than half a million tons of an average value of more than three million dollars. To any one who saw the great heaps of bones piled along the railroads and stacked on the prairies during 1881 and 1882, this statement will not seem at all unreasonable. Hundreds of men engaged in the business, and a man never thought of going through the bone country with an empty wagon. If he had hauled a load of supplies to some ranch, he would gather a load of bones on his return trip to town. The man who hauled the wire with which the Goodnight pasture on the Quitaque was built made \$1,500 on the side by hauling back a load of bones each trip. He had three big ox teams and hauled about twelve to fifteen tons each trip. The roads were lined with bone haulers and bone gatherers were camped all over the prairies. The rigs ranged all the way from the eight and ten-mule teams to the blind mule, skeleton horse and dilapidated wagon outfit.

During the bone boom the prairies presented a most unique appearance, for one looking in any direction would see great white mounds ranging in size from the dimensions of a haystack

to that of a small mountain. These mountains were buffalo bones which the bone haulers had gathered and piled, and were temporary monuments to slaughtering grounds, where one or more big killings had taken place. Every one of these bones had been gathered within a radius of a mile or so of the pile, and the size of the pile depended upon the number of buffaloes that had been killed in that vicinity. When the bone gatherer had hauled and piled all the bones in a certain locality, he would put up some kind of a signboard on which he would write his name, then move to another bone field and thus continue so long as he could find unpre-empted picking, either hauling the bones to market himself or selling them in the pile on the prairie to some bone buyer, for bones were a commodity then, just as cotton is now, and there were men who made bone buying a specialty, bidding against each other on the streets and sending agents throughout the country to buy all they could in the stack.

The bone haulers recognized the same system of rights as did the buffalo hunters, i. e., that each man had a discovery title to his own territory, and that whosoever disregarded this custom, subjected himself to the consequences. Carcasses were scattered all over the prairie and these belonged to whoever found them, but when a man went to work on an old killing ground he alone had a right to the bones in that particular vicinity. These killing grounds were the places where the hunters had got good stands, and in many places an area of two or three hundred acres would be completely covered with bones.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PECULIARITIES OF THE HUNTERS AND THE GAME THEY HUNTED.

So far as my personal experience and observations extend, I have found the old buffalo hunters the most unique of all frontiersmen, for it is an especially noticeable fact that the pursuits of men have molded them into distinct types. The buffalo hunter, the cowboy and other classes of frontiersmen are distinguishable one from the other by conduct, fixed habits and even personal appearance, as complete and distinct as is the difference between the Eastern dude and the Eastern farmer. They were the diversified, dissimilar products of the same locality. Almost without exception, I have found the old buffalo hunters very reticent, especially nonecommunicative in regard to their own deeds, experiences and observations, a fact that is regrettable because they know so much that is worth knowing and that would be of such great interest to others, and what they might say would not be trashy romance, but solid truth. Resolute men are generally men of few words, and the buffalo hunters were a fearless, determined class of men, for no other kind of men would have dared to enter a field so beset with dangers of every kind as was the buffalo country from the beginning to the close of the slaughter. Their occupation was one of hardships, hard work and isolation. They worked every day in the year and every hour during the day from dawn till dark, regardless of weather, each man having his own special line of work which

kept him separated from his companions during most of the day, and each man assumed an equal share of all responsibility and danger with a full knowledge of the fact. I once asked an old buffalo hunter if they were as noncommunicative among themselves around their camps as they are now with other people.

"Oh, well," he drawled, "I don't call to mind just now any instance where a feller could have got enough material around a buffalo camp to start a gas plant."

Of course in speaking of the old buffalo hunters, I have reference to the professionals, and not to the hundreds of amateurs who ventured into the hunting grounds at various times, especially in 1876, after the hunt had virtually closed, nor to the dime novel celebrities who crossed the Indian country with a Federal army as a body guard.

With every hunting outfit there was a man who did the hunting and killing, and the skinners who did the skinning and carved the meats that were to be cured. The hunter would leave the camp generally before daylight, followed by the skinners, there being two men with each wagon. As soon as the hunter found a herd, whether it be one of a few dozen or several hundred, the work began, and it was here that the hunter's marksmanship and skill were displayed. First he would take advantage of the wind to keep the buffaloes from smelling him, for their sense of smell was remarkable and the whiff of a man was the signal for a run. Having secured this advantage, the hunter would leave his horse to be picked up by the skinners, while he maneuvered for a good shot, always selecting the lead bulls as the first targets. By killing the lead bulls or sending a few bullets whistling in front of a herd, the hunter could generally make them take any course he desired, and in this way bring them to a "stand," that is, cause them to so mill about that he could kill them all or as many as he desired, for the professional hunter was a considerate man and never killed more buffaloes than he thought his men could skin that day, but the best of hunters would frequently fail in his first attempt and would have to cautiously follow a herd many miles before getting a "stand." The hunters and skinners were all experts in their respective lines, this being especially essential in the case of the hunters, and the range produced less than a dozen men like J. Wright Moor, Jim White and George Causey. They were expert riflemen, carefully studied the nature and habits of the buffalo and knew how to take advantage of their every movement, for with them it was a business proposition—the accomp-

lishment of the greatest possible results in the shortest possible time and with the least possible expenditure of ammunition.

The hunter always carried an extra round of 100 cartridges, to be used if attacked by Indians and for no other purpose, a precaution adopted by all hunters after the killing of Marshall Sewell near the head of Bull Creek, in the early part of 1874. Sewell was working on the divide between Bull Creek and the Yellow House Canyon, while the Indians with a herd of stolen horses were camped near by in a tributary of the Yellow House Canyon. They knew that if Sewell got to the cap rock he would see the horses and send the news over the country. Knowing the number of cartridges in a belt they lay in ambush, counted the number of shots, and when he had exhausted his ammunition the Indians charged upon him and killed him, and before his mutilated body was discovered the Indians had made good their escape.

Owing to the character of their work, the hunters were exposed to the greatest dangers and subjected to the greatest hardships. If the hunter got a good "stand" early in the day he would be able to finish his work and return to camp by the middle of the evening, but if he had to follow the herd several hours before making a killing, night would frequently find him on the prairie many miles from camp, afoot and alone, having tasted neither food nor water since early morning, and carrying a twenty-pound buffalo gun, as many pounds of ammunition, following a buffalo herd all day and watching for Indians, was a feat requiring nerve, a cool head and an iron constitution. Perhaps there would be a howling blizzard, the sleet and snow rattling and sifting down, or rain pouring in torrents, and then through the inky darkness he must find his way to the camp, a feat in which he seldom failed, and one that could be performed by the experienced plainsman alone, and one that is to me a pre-eminent psychological mystery. Winter was, of course, the season of greatest suffering on the buffalo range, and more men died as a result of exposure than from all other causes.

The skinners worked until the day's killing was finished or until darkness drove them from the field, and frequently did not return to camp before midnight, to be out of bed and at work again before daylight. But the skinners working in pairs, always being well armed, were better prepared to defend themselves against the Indians, and, having a wagon in which to haul

plenty of water and provisions for the day, fared much better than did the hunter.

Toward the close of the slaughter the amateur hunter became the torment of the professional hunter. The amateur would butt into the range, make a mess of everything, do no good himself and play havoc with the professional. Many old hunters would gladly give the amateurs all the meat they wanted to keep them from going on the range and frightening all the buffaloes out of the country. During the principal hunting season of 1876 there were probably 5,000 men on the buffalo range in Texas. Possibly 800 of them were professionals, and the balance were "greeners" from all parts of the country and every walk of life, who thought that all they had to do to kill a buffalo was to go out on the range, cock a gun and shoot, but who soon discovered to their sorrow that they couldn't get close enough to a herd of buffaloes to see them with a field glass. At one time more than 200 men, most of them farmers from Central Texas, were following Causey and Mooar Brothers' skinning outfits. They had come to the range with no practical idea or knowledge of the character of the work to be done, and had all manner of old guns. After a few comical or ridiculous blunders as hunters, they were more than willing to compromise with the hunter on whose range they were trespassing, take the meat of buffaloes killed by him, and return home happy and full of romantic adventure at the like of which future generations might marvel.

The buffalo hunters have never claimed the distinction or honors of being the pioneers of civilization in Western Texas, but they were the first specimens of that product to enter the territory named, and just as the forerunners of civilization enter other lands of darkness they had mercenary motives, but they deserve credit for never having attempted to disguise that fact. As missionaries they were an unsurpassed success, for whenever they decided to show some Indian the way to the happy hunting ground, that Indian generally went, in so far as departing this life was concerned.

When the first buffalo hunters began operations at Big Lake in 1873, they were in what was then known as the "Unknown Kiowa and Comanche Range," at that time designated on the map as the "Llano Estacado and Panhandle country," then supposed to be a part of the "great American desert," which later discoveries demonstrated never did exist. Haskell, Throckmorton, Hardeman, Jones and Taylor counties had been sur-

veyed and their boundary lines established, but they were uninhabited, and consequently unorganized. From the rest of the then so-called "Llano Estacado and Panhandle country" the State Legislature, in 1876, created and had surveyed fifty-four counties, each of them about thirty miles square. In all this scope of country the few buffalo hunters camped at Big Lake constituted the population in 1873, with the exception of several bands of roving Indians, but they were such a bad lot that the census enumerator never visited them to find out how many there were nor where they lived.

A few remarks in regard to the buffaloes, and the sketches pertaining to the great slaughter and the hunters will have been concluded:

The buffaloes were migratory, drifting as far south as the Rio Grande in the winter and as far north as the Dominion of Canada in summer. The southward movement would begin about September 1, and the northward movement about March 1, and by July 1 only a few buffaloes, most of them old bulls and cows, would remain south of the Canadian River. It was this drifting that doubtless accounts for what has long puzzled old range men, and that is this: There were a great many more buffaloes per acre on the range than there have ever been cattle, yet in buffalo times there was always an abundance of grass, and hay could nearly always be cut on the prairie where to-day cattle have to hustle for a few morsels of food. The buffaloes simply handled the range more intelligently than man has since done. While the great bulk of them were feeding on their Northern ranges during the late summer the grass was growing on their winter ranges in the South, and thus they had excellent pasturage at all seasons, the grass on the Northern ranges getting a good growth during the spring and early summer before the arrival of the buffaloes.

In their migratory movements the buffaloes evinced remarkable system. The number of buffaloes in a herd varied from a few hundred to many thousands, and there were frequently so many big herds in proximity that they really appeared as one herd. An old buffalo hunter once told me that he had stood on an elevation and counted as many as half a dozen herds within a few hundred yards of each other. Some of these herds were grazing, others all lying down, except here and there a standing sentinel, and others marching along with military precision, but all of these herds were headed in the same di-



From Fort Davis to Fort Bliss the mail route was through a country of varying topography, but continuous desolation. It passed through a considerable portion of the Davis Mountains, then over a rough, hilly country and a bunchgrass and cactus desert. There were but few water holes along the route, and two of them were near the town of Van Horn, where this fight took place.

In August, 1868, an outfit of eight men in charge of Big Foot Wallace, the noted scout and Indian fighter, left Fort Davis to accompany the United States mail to Fort Bliss via Fort Hancock. The outfit was composed of Big Foot Wallace, Sam Gibbs, Ed Russel, Dock Joy, John Clinton, Dave Harrington, George Clark, and Pat Dean, the mail carrier. It was a hot, dusty day, and the men and animals were tired and thirsty, but were within a mile or so of the water holes when Wallace, looking through his glasses, saw a dust rising some distance to the west, and remarked to his men that an outfit of some kind was making for the water; that it might be soldiers or Indians, and if Indians, the outfit would have to get to the water first or go thirsty for several hours, and whether the approaching party was Indians or soldiers, Wallace determined to make a rush and reach the water first. Each man in the outfit had an extra horse, and in addition to these were several pack mules. These were thrown in front and driven in a run toward the water. It was about 4 o'clock when the outfit reached the water, which was in a slight sandy depression surrounded by sandy knolls, while a few hundred yards away were considerable mounds and hills, therefore the water holes were not blessed with even average strategic advantages.

After the men and animals had drunk, the stock was placed in a close bunch in the center of the depression, and all possible arrangements made to resist an attack should the approaching party prove to be Indians. The mail carrier was placed in charge of the horses, and this left but seven men available for defensive or offensive duty, and just as Wallace had concluded placing them as desired, a band of about 100 Indians came around the point of a hill a few hundred yards away; but they did not advance much further until they discovered that white men had possession of the water, whereupon they stopped and encamped for a few minutes, and then, whooping and yelling, made a pell-mell dash toward the little band of whites, but Wallace did not give the command to fire until they had come within

a few yards of his position, and then the fusillading began. When the Indians, who had fired several shots but done no damage, stopped, wheeled-about and got beyond the danger line, leaving several dead horses. All night the men guarded, but the Indians made no further assault until daylight the next morning, when they made another desperate dash upon the whites, firing upon them with guns and bows and arrows, and making the welkin ring with the fiendish shouts of desperate demons; but, as before, the white men reserved their fire until the enemy had approached within a reasonably close distance, but the Indians were more desperate this time and did not stop until eleven of their number and several of their horses had departed post-haste for the happy hunting ground, then they retreated; but as a result of this assault Sam Gibbs was killed, George Clark received two wounds in the left arm and John Clinton was wounded in the top of the shoulder; but neither of the wounded men was totally disabled.

There was no time for dressing wounds or caring for the dead, for it was only a few minutes until the Indians adopted another plan and made a third desperate attack. Their horses were suffering for water, and if turned loose would start directly for it. The Indians took advantage of this fact, turned the horses loose and got among them, hoping in this way to use the horses as breastworks, shield themselves and succeed in their assault; but this ruse failed, and so many of their horses were killed that they had to retreat, taking with them their horses, and under this cover carried away several of their own dead, but the number could not be determined. The Indians then took positions on the high ground, and for several hours their bullets and arrows literally rained around the whites; but fortunately, miraculously, in fact did no damage. But matters were growing serious with the white men, owing to their exposed position, and Wallace ordered that the extra horses and pack mules be killed and used as breastworks; the unsuspecting animals were led to the places designated by Wallace and shot down, and the Indians, seeing that they had been outwitted, again changed their tactics.

Lying on one side of their horses, and riding at full speed, they would circle around the camp, keeping up a constant fire, but the men took positions behind the dead animals, and let the Indians waste their ammunition. All day the Indians continued this character of tactics, circling for a while in one direction

and then in another, making grandstand plays, and maneuvers calculated to deceive, but Wallace was too watchful, resourceful and familiar with their character of warfare to be taken unawares or give them any additional advantage. But the condition of the besieged became more desperate every hour, and it would not be possible for them to withstand many more assaults or maintain their position under a siege of any considerable duration. The thirst of the Indians had about reached the limit of endurance, and they were growing correspondingly desperate and furious; the white men were almost completely worn out, the wounded ones were suffering agonies, ammunition was nearly exhausted, and to add to the other deplorable features of the situation, a sickening stench arose from the carcasses of the dead man and animals. About sundown the Indians withdrew, but Wallace was confident that they had been considerably reinforced late in the evening and that they were only waiting until daylight to make another assault, against which the besieged could not hope to be successful; but Wallace could not attempt to retreat and thus abandon what little shelter he had, owing to the fact that it was not dark enough for him to conceal his movements. But so long as life lasts a hope may linger, and things that may be lonesome and cheerless, filling the mind with despond and gloom under some circumstances, may bring hope and elation under others. For this little band of men, surrounded by desperate savages, sick from stench of decaying carcasses, worn with hours of ceaseless watching and fighting, there was yet the possibility of deliverance. Perhaps the very fact that the two little pools of water over which they kept a gloomy vigil was the only water within a radius of miles would lead to their rescue, for possibly some thirsty scouting outfit, forced by thirst to make this place, would come riding through the night to the relief of the little band of apparently doomed men. But there were still more tangible prospects of an escape.

The gloomy silence of night enveloped the blood-stained sandhills and lent ghostlike forms to the numerous caeti, but it was not that inky darkness the little band desired, for even the faint light of the stars was against any attempt that might be made to escape. The hoot of the owl was answered by the howl of the wolf, and the scream of the panther by the neigh of a horse. But to the little band of plainsmen these were not merely dismal sounds from out the lonesome, gloomy darkness, but Indian signals communicating their whereabouts to each other, and to the

little band of besieged the unwelcome tidings that they were completely surrounded and watched by merciless foes.

It had been a hot, sultry day and the heat of the scorching sand had been almost unendurable, especially to the wounded men, and scarcely a breeze came to their temporary relief. About nightfall a black, threatening cloud arose in the northwest, and no cloud was ever more eagerly watched by human eyes nor the bursting of a storm more earnestly implored, for the furies of the elements meant salvation to the little band of men around those water holes. From a few desultory gusts the wind rose to a gale, the thunders sounded the approach of relief, and the storm cloud rolled onward. About 10 o'clock the first drops of rain began pattering around the men, and a few minutes later Wallace had them mounted and ready to ride as soon as the storm should break in full blast. Then came a deafening peal of thunder, a lurid flash of lightning and the binding, sifting sand that swept before the gusts of wind was borne down by a veritable torrent of rain. On with the storm rode the little band, not with a rush, but slowly, carefully, cautiously. Wallace was in the lead and occasionally gave a low whistle to enable the men to follow him. All night the little band, full of hope and confidence in their leader's ability to pilot them safely back to Fort Davis, rode through the darkness, down canyons, over mountains, sandhills, and across usually dry branches now swollen by the rains to swirling streams; not a word was spoken, not a moan betrayed the sufferings of the wounded, only that occasional low, inimitable whistle of the leader and pilot, guiding them over ground they could not see, and through darkness that sight could not penetrate. Daylight found them in the mountains, wet, hungry and almost falling from their horses from stupor and exhaustion, but they succeeded in finding the stage route and about 10 o'clock they came upon a camp of scouting cavalry. With the outfit was a physician who dressed the wounds of Clinton and Clark, and after getting something to eat, Wallace and his men continued their journey to Fort Davis, while the troops hurried to the place near Van Horn, where the fight had taken place. The Indians had scalped and mutilated the corpse of Gibbs and made good their escape.

Of the men participating in this fight, Big Foot Wallace died at his ranch on the Frio River some years ago, Sam Gibbs was killed in the fight, Ed Russell is a miner in Colorado, Dock Joy died near Fort Clark in 1888, Dave Harrington is a Methodist

minister in Iowa, George Clark is a lawyer in Georgia, Pat Deau died at Brownsville several years ago, and John Clinton is Chief of Police of Abilene, Texas.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JIM DOWN'S TRAMP ACROSS THE PLAINS.

I do not know whether Jim Downs is or isn't living now. If he is alive I suppose he is a resident of Stonewall or Fisher County, but wherever he is he is an interesting, philosophical character, and who, in his early days, had an experience that he has survived but never forgot. I had heard a great deal from old-timers about Downs' perilous tramp in the summer of 1876 from near Fort Stockton to the mouth of Silver Creek, a distance of about two hundred miles, and considered myself very fortunate when, some years ago, circumstances enabled me to meet and become personally acquainted with the old gentleman. I was traveling across the country in a buggy and having made a several days' hard drive, my team was about fagged out, and though it was late in the fall and very chilly, and I was entirely out of provisions, I decided to cross the Clear Fork and camp at the first hole of fresh water I found, as I would have to drive about fifteen miles before finding a lodging place and I would not cross the Clear Fork before sundown. The water in the Clear Fork where I crossed it was "gyp" and wholly unfit to drink, so I jogged along, keeping a close watch for a hole of rain water where I could quench my thirst and strike camp for the night. But fate was against me, and finally it became so dark that I couldn't distinguish a water hole from a wire fence nor the wrong road from the right direction. I saw a camp fire only a few yards from the road-

side. Under circumstances of this kind a camp fire is the most cheerful sight imaginable. It calms violent passions, restores sanity, makes an optimist of the pessimist, and fills a cold world and a dark, chilly night with visions of comfort and plenty to eat. I turned the team out of the road and was driving in the direction of the camp fire when I drove astraddle of a mesquite tree, a tug came loose and other complications arose, and had the team been fresh and spirited there would doubtless have been a runaway and general smashup, but their broken down physical condition qualified them perfectly for a scrape of this kind. The collision with the tree and a few extemporaneous remarks which I deemed appropriate for the occasion served to notify the man near the camp fire that there was a traveler in distress not far away, so he came out to assist me, and in a cool, dispassionate manner advised me to unhitch and leave the buggy where it was until morning. His intentions were good, but part of his advice was wholly superfluous. For instance, the team was already exceedingly unhitched, and the buggy was so badly tangled up with the tree that about the only way to get it loose was to have a runaway or chop the tree down, and darkness not being an auspicious time for wielding an ax, I accepted his suggestion as to leaving the buggy where it was until daylight. Of course I got supper, and the old gentleman divided his bed with me, and after we had been together an hour or so and struck up a very intimate fireside acquaintance we introduced ourselves, and my host was Jim Downs. I immediately brought up the subject of his early day adventures, of which I had heard so many old-timers speak, and here give in substance the story as Downs himself related it to me, as follows:

"In the summer of 1876 I was working on a ranch in Runnels Comty. I wasn't doing much and wasn't getting much for it, and of course I was ambitious to do better and as me and the boss didn't get along very well he seemed more than anxious to encourage my aspirations. Therefore when some strangers, having a considerable herd of cattle and claiming to be from San Antonio, came along one day and offered me a job of cooking at a good salary, I accepted and the boss consented, and though I had overdrawn my salary thirty-five cents he called the account square.

"The fellers with the cattle said they were going to Southern Arizona, and nothing of an interesting character occurred nor had the conduct of the parties been such as to arouse a suspicion

in my mind until we got in the vicinity of Fort Stockton, when I chanced to overhear a conversation which revealed to me a grave state of affairs. Them fellers were simply a lot of cattle thieves with a herd of stolen stock, and they had got wind of the fact that the Fort Stockton authorities were watching for them. I think one of the outfit had quietly slipped into Fort Stockton and gathered the news. I didn't feel like that good dog Tray you have heard about, not much. I felt more like an orphan hound pup in the middle of a deep hole of water with a rock around his neck. I knew it would never do to be caught with that outfit, yet how was I going to get away? From what I overheard I knew we were forty or fifty miles from Fort Stockton, but I knew absolutely nothing about the country, nor did I know what direction we were from town. I didn't sleep much that night, but put in most of the time devising a scheme. I would never intimate that I suspected anything wrong, but would get enough information to enable me to reach Fort Stockton. The feller who was bossing the outfit had been absent a day or two, claiming that he had gone back the trail, or rather the route, we had come, to hunt for some cattle that had got away, but I was satisfied that he had in reality been to Fort Stockton on a spying expedition, and that he knew the direction and would of course be the one to approach. He stood the last guard that night and came to his breakfast the next morning after the others had started on with the herd, and this gave me the desired opportunity. He was glum and sullen, seemed greatly troubled and proceeded to bawl me out about my cooking, the first time he had ever complained. I suppose this unnerved me, and I got somewhat tangled in my proceedings, but nevertheless I brought the subject up by asking him if we were not close to Fort Stockton.

"'Maybe we are and maybe we ain't,' he growled.

"'I suppose we will get there in a day or two,' I continued, but I reckon I was getting nervous and he was getting suspicious. At any rate he blurted out:

"'What's it to you whether we do or don't? What the h—l's Fort Stockton got to do with this 'drive'?"

"'Nothing that I know of, except that I am almost barefooted and nearly naked, and need some clothes and shoes, besides we are nearly out of baking powders and salt, and a few other culinary necessities, and I thought I would get a horse and go over and get what we need when we get tolerably close to the place, if you are not going by.' I said 'over,' but I didn't

know whether it was up, down or across to Fort Stockton.

"Well," he remarked, "you can pull out whenever you get ready."

"But what's the use for a fellow to start for a place when he doesn't even know the direction."

"Get a map and maybe you can locate it that way," he suggested.

"I might have taken a map if we had had one and located Fort Stockton, but nothing short of a divine revelation would have located me just at that time. If I had known the relative positions of Fort Stockton and the north star I might have figured it out, but being shy on astronomical knowledge and without any map, I was as completely lost as a benighted heathen from a Christmas standpoint. More than that, my attempt to get information had merely complicated my position. I felt that I was suspicioned, would be closely watched and probably fatally dealt with the first time I made a wrong step or false move. I must play the game scientifically, and yet about all I could do would be to trust to fate and favorable circumstances.

"All that day I studied and worried, and that night I slept but little, but could devise no plan of temporal salvation. My only hope was that the thieves would elude the officers and thus save one good man, that good man being myself.

"The next day after my interview with the boss, and while the herd was moving along probably a mile in advance of the wagon, the State cattle inspector, with a squad of rangers, paid the outfit a visit, but the outfit, anticipating trouble, had kept a sharp lookout, and when the officers reached the herd they found it without herders, and while the officers were inspecting the cattle one of the gang rushed up to the wagon, hurriedly got a few articles, and said to me: 'Take care of yourself, young man. The jig's up and the other boys have escaped.' My first thought was to get away with the wagon and team, which I did not think had been seen by the officers, and acting upon this rash impulse, I turned and started at full speed in an opposite direction from the herd, but had not gone far until I discovered that the officers had seen the wagon and were giving chase and rapidly gaining ground. I was driving a pair of mules neither of which had ever been ridden and to have cut one of them loose and tried to escape on his bare back would have resulted in nothing more than a hard fall, a riderless mule and my certain capture, and flight being an evidence of guilt, my fate after reaching Fort Stockton would have been a Coro-



ner's innest and a lonely grave with a cow thief's epitaph on a limerock tombstone. I was on the outskirts of a rough country and perhaps 500 yards in advance of the officers, and as I turned the point of a rough, bush and boulder-covered hill I was completely out of sight of them. Before me was a perfectly open, level valley probably five miles wide. Here was my opportunity and I took advantage of it. Grabbing a Winchester rifle which was in the front of the wagon and without slackening the break-neck speed of the mules I jumped to the ground and quickly hid among the boulders and brush on the hillside, barely having time to do so when the officers dashed by in pursuit of the now runaway mules. The officers did not discover that the driver had escaped, the wagon having the sheet on it. Owing to the start the mules had and the gait they traveled the officers did not very readily overtake them, and not caring to venture too near the wagon loaded with desperate characters as they might conjecture, they fired probably fifty shots into the sheet, and were nearing the far side of the valley the last time I saw them. Had the officers killed one of the mules soon after I left the wagon of course they would have returned and in all probability have found me, but I suppose they calculated that they could soon capture the whole business, at least being able to do so before the team had crossed the open country.

"In jumping from the wagon I had severely sprained an ankle, but as soon as the officers had passed I proceeded to crawl and hobble away from that locality, and went about two miles, where I found a good hiding place, and here I began to meditate. An invoice of my personal effects and earthly prospects revealed a very gloomy state of affairs. My ankle was swelling and paining me awfully, there were just three cartridges in the magazine of the gun, I was guilty of no crime, yet a fugitive from the law and was probably walking into the jaws of a fate more horrible than the gallows, for in addition to the fact there were Indians in the country, I had not a bite to eat, was almost barefooted and so far as I knew there was not a ranch or settlement nearer than 200 miles; but I had one thing that I would not have traded for a gold mine under the circumstances, and that was a tin box full of sulphur matches. I lay in my hiding place until dark, by which time I was suffering with pain, had considerable fever and a raging thirst, but I hobbled to a hole of water some few hundred yards away, got a drink, and with the north star as my only guide started on my journey to an

unknown destination, with the odds 3000 to nothing that I didn't get there.

"I had decided that by traveling in a northeasterly direction I would be able to strike the settlements somewhere in the vicinity of Runnels County, and possibly would find a buffalo hunter's camp between the Pecos and Colorado Rivers, but of course knew absolutely nothing as to the character of country I would have to cross, but I deemed this plan much better than trying to follow the route we had come with the herd, for I knew there was not a camp or place of any kind along that route where I could get anything to eat, besides it was a very rough country, hard for a crippled, barefooted man to travel over, and by the new route I had calculated to reach the plains or open country much sooner than I did.

"Owing to my lameness and the rough, mountainous character of the country I traveled only about ten miles the first night, and at daylight the next morning came near running plump into an Indian camp. Old frontiersmen used to say that whenever you see an Indian, rest assured that that Indian has seen you twice, but my case was undoubtedly an exception to the rule. I was so hungry that I would have gladly entertained a proposition to trade those Indians my scalp for a chunk of raw dog, but as the Indians were total strangers to me I didn't feel like making them a social call or opening business negotiations with them. I was confident they would take all the scalps they could get hold of, but had serious doubts about them having any dogs to spare, so I gave the Indians a squatter's right to about ten miles of surroundance and traveled very slowly and cautiously that day, covering only a few miles. I was ravenously hungry, and while game, especially rabbits, was plentiful I could not shoot at anything. If there should be Indians in the vicinity, and it was impossible to tell how near I was to a bunch or camp of them, at any time, the report of the gun would betray my whereabouts, and as the Indians were liable to find me at any time, despite all my precaution, I would need every cartridge I had to run even a decent game of bluff. After several attempts I succeeded late that evening in killing a rabbit with a rock. I broiled and ate the rabbit, and then, selecting a good hiding place, went to sleep, and contrary to my intentions did not wake up until nearly midnight, when I resumed my journey, and late in the afternoon of the second day I reached the Pecos River, which stream I had to swim, with my gun and clothing strapped across my back. After crossing the

Pecos I was three days and nights trudging through the mountains and sandhills and then struck the lower plains. I was weak, hungry and thirsty, and my poorly protected feet were blistered and sore, and my wounded leg swollen from my body to the end of my toes. I had not tasted water for nearly twenty-four hours, and had not attempted to kill a rabbit, but fortunately there had been recent rains and I soon found a lake of water on the plains where I quenched my thirst, but at the lake I discovered Indians' signs and was afraid to go to sleep or rest long in one place as I might fall into a fatal stupor. Before striking the plains I had provided myself with half a dozen rocks, but they were getting mighty heavy and it was a debatable question with me whether I should throw away the gun or the rocks. Just before sundown I threw five of the rocks at one rabbit before killing it, and as I was getting too weak to throw with any desirable results, I never bothered about gathering up the rocks that I had thrown at the rabbit, and threw away the other rock as I had no further use for it, and while it was no larger than your fist it would have weighed several pounds, comparatively speaking. I was nearly four days and nights limping across the plains and the rough country west of the Colorado River. There were no buffaloes in the country, and of course there were no hunters or camps, but at last I reached the breaks of the Colorado River, having no idea as to what part of the country I was in nor how far I was from civilization. Desperate with pain and delirious with fever I sat down under a little tree to rest and decide whether I should end my misery or prolong the struggle. I had used two of my cartridges in killing rabbits after throwing away my rock, and had just enough ammunition left to kill one more rabbit or a miserable human, and the weight of the argument was in the rabbit's favor.

"My feet were worn to the quick and bleeding, and to wrap them up and partially protect them I had torn most of the clothing from my body, which was fearfully sunburned and blistered. I was rewapping the worn-out rags around my feet and trying to determine whether it should be me or the rabbit, when I heard an animal walking up the ravine, and looking in the direction of the sounds saw a Mexican riding a burro and passing a few yards from me, and I immediately continued the case of myself vs. the rabbit, and took up that of the Mexican. The Mexican had a small bundle, evidently his provisions and camping outfit, so I decided to interview the gentle-

man, and if there wasn't a ranch or camp mighty close I would borrow that burro and whatever the bundle contained, regardless of the owner's consent or protests. You see bad associations and desperate circumstances demoralize a man. First, I got into bad company and then into trouble, and I felt sure that if captured no explanations I could make would save my neck, and whether I was right or wrong in this conjecture I am glad now that I took the course I did. Next you find me with designs on a span of good mules and a whole wagonload of provisions, and next resolved to deprive a poor lone Mexican of his dirty bundle and sorry burro, probably the sum total of his earthly possessions.

"When the Mexican got within about fifty yards of me I called to him, and as he was traveling north, while I was headed east, I cocked my gun and started to intercept him. Now, with the exception of the two reports from my gun, the howling of wolves at night and the calling of water fowls around the lakes, my own voice was the first sound I had heard for nearly ten days and nights, and it really startled me, and the report of a cannon would not have been a greater surprise to the Mexican, who stopped and looked uneasily at the human apparition then limping toward him. It was less than ten minutes from the time I saw that old man until I was thanking him, with tears running down my cheeks, for the noble manner in which he treated me and the favors he bestowed upon me. He was then on his way to a buffalo camp, about thirty miles to the northwest, but told me that it was only about sixteen miles to the mouth of Big Silver, where some buffalo hunters were camped. He divided provisions with me, insisted that I should take his burro, and when I declined this offer he more stoutly insisted that I should take his shoes, but my feet were so swollen that I could not have put them inside of a tanyard, so I declined this kindness. He then took the blanket from under his saddle and gave it to me to wrap my feet. I slept until about midnight that night, woke up feeling considerably refreshed, though my feet were torturing me, and I could scarcely stand, but after limbering up a little they got better and about noon the next day I hobbled into the camp, where I was properly cared for.

"Of course no tongue can ever describe or mind conceive how I suffered on that trip, not even do I realize it now. The event and the incidents live in my memory, but the wounds have healed and the tortures have vanished. This picture isn't

altogether dark, for there is a bright side to it. I learned a lesson of great value to me, but aside from this selfish feature of the case I have since befriended that old Mexican, and the night will never get too dark, the distance too great, the wind will never get too cold, the sun shine too hot, nor the rain pour too hard for me to go to him if he needs a friend and I know it.

"But, say, if I ever do lay eyes on one of those cow thieves I'll have my two months' wages with compound interest for twenty years, or make him wish he hadn't been born till I died."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DISASTROUS NOLEN-HARBY EXPEDITION.

In the summer of 1876 the Mescalero Apache Indians made a raid through Western Texas, going as far east as Shackelford County, plundering every unguarded buffalo camp along the route of their raid and stealing several hundred horses and mules from hunters and ranchmen. There were probably a hundred of these marauders, and it was the last big Indian raid to which the country was subjected, though several small bands of different tribes caused more or less trouble as late as 1882. The raid of 1876, because of the number of Indians, the devilment done and the disastrous consequences that befell their pursuers, stands pre-eminent in the Indian history of Western Texas. Reynolds City, in Stonewall County, was then a thriving frontier town and buffalo hunters' supply station, and to this place the hunters who had suffered from the depredations made their way as best they could and as quickly as possible. The news was soon spread throughout the country, and in a short while every hunter and ranchman within a radius of 100 miles had assembled in Reynolds City for the purpose of perfecting organization, adopting plans, following and punishing the Indians, and recovering the stolen stock. In the meantime the news had reached the commanding officer at Fort Griffin, and he immediately dispatched a company of negro soldiers, under Capt. Nolan, in pursuit of the Indians, but as the hunters

and ranchmen had not asked for and did not anticipate Federal aid, they proceeded to get busy according to their own practical ideas. The ranchmen and hunters who had not been molested and the business men of Reynolds City contributed liberally and soon had forty-seven men properly provisioned and equipped for the expedition. Jim Harby was elected Captain and Jose, the noted scout and Indian trailer, was employed as guide. The first objective point was Double Lakes, as it was known the Indians had come from and were returning to Southeastern New Mexico, and that they would cross the plains somewhere in the vicinity of these lakes. At Double Lakes the scout found a fresh Indian trail leading into the sandhills, and after a few hours' rest the hunters were ready to start in hot pursuit, when the negro soldiers arrived and a wrangle ensued between the two commanders. This is perhaps the first time the negro question ever became a vital issue in a campaign in Western Texas. The buffalo hunters objected to soldiers for various reasons, and to negro soldiers in particular, so they bluntly refused to place themselves under Nolan or permit his soldiers to take precedence in the premises. Nolan insisted upon being commander in chief of the whole, and it began to look as though the chase would terminate in a general broil, for the hunters knew they were capable of dealing with the situation and properly handling the Indians, if found, but they knew furthermore, that the Indians had several thousand dollars' worth of stock in addition to those taken from the people in Western Texas, which the hunters proposed to appropriate to their own benefit, and the presence of soldiers would only complicate matters. After considerable wrangling and much loss of precious time, an agreement was reached whereby Harby was to have precedence in command and Jose was to guide, the hunters having agreed in a private consultation that if the Indians were overtaken they would break for the stock and let the Indians and negroes fight it out.

The Indian trail led into the very heart of the sandhills and through a section of country wholly unwatered. The supply of water carried with the outfit was necessarily limited and soon consumed. It was then in the middle of July, the weather was very warm, which of course aggravated the thirst and sufferings of the men and animals, and the negro soldiers began to murmur and threaten. Matters grew worse as the sufferings of the men increased until they were partially crazed with misery. Capt. Nolan finally accused Jose of treachery, declar-

ing that he was purposely leading the men to death, and directed one of his subordinate officers to order Jose to the rear and with instructions that if he did not obey to shoot him; but knowing that this would result in a battle to death between the hunters and soldiers, the subordinate refused to do as directed, and Capt. Nolan was about to take the matter in his own hands when he was prevailed upon to have it determined by a joint conference, Jose being called in to give information and advice. He told the officers that he was satisfied the Indians had been practicing their usual cunning and had traveled in a circuitous route, near water, and that one or two of them would leave the main body at a time and go to water, but that it would be foolish for them to try to find and follow any of these stragglers' trails, as they might be going to water at one time and purposely misleading their pursuers at another, knowing that the latter would soon begin to suffer and might follow some of the decoy trails. He said that it was only about sixty miles to some fresh water lakes and that the trail was leading directly toward them. It was not more than forty miles to water, but the guide knew the men were suffering agonies, were becoming delirious and desperate, that many of them mistrusted him, that every mile they traveled seemed double that distance, and that they would not follow him more than half the distance designated when, feeling that they had traveled the full distance, would wreak vengeance on him.

It wasn't a question of finding Indians now, but a matter of self-preservation, and with the exception of Bill Benson, the hunters elected to follow Jose to Clear Lakes, the lakes to which he had reference in his statement. Capt. Nolan decided to make an attempt to return to Double Lakes, but quite a number of his men, disregarding orders, continued with the hunters. Bill Benson remarked that every man must now take care of himself and that so far as he was concerned he would strike out alone for the big spring on the Yellow House Canyon, where he arrived after a feat of endurance that has probably never been surpassed on the Western plains.

Every man that followed Jose was saved, but their sufferings were awful. Many of their horses gave out and then the men would have to drag themselves through the sand, while the sun swatched them in flames of fiery heat. Every now and then some of the men on foot would faint and fall, then rise and mechanically follow their companions. It finally got to the point where every horse in the outfit, with one exception, was



scarcely able to move along. This horse belonged to a negro soldier and the staying qualities of this horse and the guide, Jose, were remarkable, neither of them having apparently reached the danger stage in their sufferings. When a few miles from the lakes Jose took the negro's horse and hurried to the water in advance of the others. At the lakes he killed two antelope, skinned them, and with the hides made two water pouches, which he filled and hastening back the route began administering to the men, now scattered along for a distance of seven or eight miles, many of them unable to travel farther. As he met them he bathed their faces and heads and then gave them a few sips of water, using his hand as a cup and allowing them no chance to gorge themselves.

Eleven of Capt. Nolan's men perished, and those that reached Double Lakes were discovered some days later in a most pitiable condition, crazed, helpless and without food, most of them hatless and many of them naked, having thrown away their guns, ammunition, rations and everything which they imagined encumbered their march. The route they had traveled presented a pathetic spectacle. First they had abandoned their train of pack mules, and strange to say, every one of the animals abandoned landed at the big spring, where Benson told his companions he was going. It seems that these animals had been watered there two or three years previously, and instinct guided them on their return. Canteens, guns, knapsacks, caps and coats, even shirts and trousers, were scattered all along the route traveled by Nolan's men and occasionally the spectacle was made more impressively repulsive by a corpse. Along the route were a number of lakes, the water in them being a pure salt brine, and at these lakes most of the soldiers were found, lying with their heads in the water, having evidently perished while drinking. In this connection may be mentioned two notable facts; first, every dead soldier's boots had been pulled off by himself or his companions, and second, not one of the corpses had been molested by the wolves.

The first night after leaving his companions Benson's horse got away from him in some manner. Already feverish and partially delirious from thirst, the awfulest suffering known in the category of human misery, he must then make his way on foot across several miles of barren, sun-parched country before reaching the spring. In relating his experience Benson said he knew about how far it was to water and about how long it would take him to travel the distance, and that he

formed a determination to reach his destination, to not give up or despond and to make sure of this to not stop to rest until the spring had been reached; to try to forget his sufferings, or at least not fully realize them by anticipating the certain relief awaiting him. As the sun rose higher and the heat became more torturing, beautiful lakes spread out upon the prairies before him, but he knew their deceptive glamor—they were only mirages. As the heat increased his thirst became more painful and his fever raged more fiercely, the beautiful lakes became more numerous, apparently dancing in mockery at his feet. At times he felt as though he was walking backwards or staggering in a direction contrary to that he wished to go, or reeling to fall, chocked by his own tongue. Again it seemed that the light was fading away and that he was being consumed from without and within by an unseen fire; but he must not give up, for it was only a few miles farther, only a few hours more. Not even a wild animal ranged in that desert, but from out the dismal solitude came a medley of sounds which incessantly tingled in his ears. At last he reached the outskirts of the canyon, and it was only a few yards to the water, but the path was rough and he must move cautiously, and having become accustomed to mechanically treading over the smooth surface of the plains, could he walk among the rocks and along the winding trail without stumbling? He was growing weaker and a great mountain of weight seemed pressing down upon his body, and his only motive power was his powerful will, his determination to reach that spring, and to not fall, for should he fall he could never rise beneath that awful weight; then the weight vanished and his body was so light that every gust of wind seemed to whirl him about, but the spring was near, he was slowly nearing the goal and he must not fall. As he neared the spring reason asserted itself and began to give him counsel. He must not drink, only bathe in the water and then sleep and rest, for to drink too much would be fatal and to drink at all would be dangerous, for once tasting water he might not control his craving. Repeating this warning to himself he crept along to the spring, and there it was! Not a mirage, but pure, delicious water. He could see it, could hear it trickling over the stones, but it was so strange, so unnatural, yet so pleasant. Repeating to himself the warning that he must not drink, he sank upon the bank of the spring and pulled off his shoes. He then attempted to wade in the water, but fell with most of his body in the spring. Then he became desperate, furious. He would

drink his full, give his life as the price and die satisfied with the transaction, but nature had provided against his own rashness, for when he pressed the water to his mouth his lips, tongue and throat were so swollen that he could not swallow. He bathed his face, head and hands, crawled upon the bank, pillowed his head upon a rock and with his throbbing, burning feet in the water he went to sleep. He had no idea what time of day it was when he reached the spring, nor how long he slept, but when he awoke it was night, though he knew not what hour; his feet were badly swollen and paining him, but he was rational and felt greatly relieved, took another good bath, drank a few handfuls of water and went to sleep again and did not wake up until late the next day. Then he was suffering nearly as badly from hunger as he had formerly suffered from thirst, but he knew that George Causey's outfit had been camped about two miles down the canyon and supposed he would still find some one there. His feet and legs were so swollen and sore that he could not walk, so he strapped his shoes on his back and crawled the entire distance from the spring to the camp, only to find it deserted, not even a scrap of buffalo meat on the ground. He found a little corn that had been wasted from horse troughs, a small piece of rancid bacon, which he devoured with great relish, and some tow sacks in which he could wrap his feet. He then rested a few hours and succeeded in reaching a buffalo camp the next day.

When Benson reached the spring he had been about five days and nights without water and more than six days and nights without food when he reached the Causey camp, none of the men with the expedition having tasted food for several hours before their water was entirely consumed. Water being scarce, the discovery of more uncertain, they took only small quantities at a time, and to have eaten would have increased their thirst. I will add, as a postscript, that the Indians got away.

Jose, who was known by no other name, was doubtless the most noted scout and guide that ever operated in Western Texas, his most noted achievement being the guiding of Gen. McKenzie to the camp of several hundred Comanche Indians, in the Tule Canyon, which resulted in their surprise and capture and the subsequent slaughter of 1500 or 2000 of their horses. From the time of his capture in 1872 until the close of the Indian troubles Jose played a prominent part in the Indian history of Western Texas and Eastern New Mexico. Jose himself was an acquisition by conquest of a somewhat peculiar character. Early

in the 70s Gen. McKenzie discovered that the Western Indians were procuring large supplies of guns and ammunition from some source and he began reconnoitering to find out the secret of this undesirable state of affairs. After several months' vain effort the General became discouraged and concluded that about the only way he could keep the guns and ammunition and Indians from getting together would be to transport the whole Indian race to a region where deadly weapon distributors wouldn't venture because of the certainty of not getting back, but while the General was sojourning under a cloud of his own wrath near the line of Texas and New Mexico a runner came from the scene of war whoops in Southern Kansas, No Man's Land and the Panhandle, bringing to the General a cordial invitation from the Secretary of War to hurry to the scene of consternation and participate as the guest of honor at the obsequies of an Indian outbreak. The General was riding in a sweeping trot and a circumspect attitude across the plains somewhere in the vicinity of the present right of way of the Pecos Valley Railroad when he came upon a train of thirty big freight-wagons. That was unusual and not expected. The General's eyes got full of interrogation points, his curiosity became aroused and the voice of duty whispered to him, saying, "Go see about it, find out to whom this outfit belongs, where it is from, where it is going, and what its business is," but when the General got within a few hundred yards of the wagons a voice from one of them commanded him to hide out. This was an embarrassing situation for the General. He was now convinced of two things—that there was something crooked about the outfit and something very straight about the way the fellow talked. The General then commanded the outfit to surrender, and the commander of the outfit sent the General a message that took off the horn of his saddle and followed this immediately by another message that would have placed the General on the retired list if his head had been a couple of inches farther south. This rudeness made the General angry and he told the party in charge of the outfit that he was no part of a gentleman. Hard feelings resulted and then there was a fight, not merely a disturbance of the peace, but a typical pioneer day disagreement. The outfit had been completely surrounded by soldiers and could not escape, and after several hours' fighting all of them, with one exception, had been killed or so badly wounded that they could not use a gun. The General again commanded the survivor, who was evidently in command of the outfit, to

surrender, but he declined, giving as a reason that he didn't want to, didn't have to and wouldn't, but after considerable parleying he changed his mind and agreed to meet the General unarmed on half way grounds. After a considerable conference he surrendered his entire outfit, including twenty-five corpses and four mortally wounded Mexicans to the United States Government. The man was Jose, owner of the outfit, and for whom the dead and wounded men had been working. His wagons were loaded with guns and ammunition and his capture solved the problem as to who had been supplying the Indians with the sinews of war for several months, and also explained why he had made such a desperate resistance.

What kind of terms were made with Jose was a secret known only to him and General McKenzie, but subsequent events caused the general impression that they were very generous. At any rate the entire outfit of teams, guns, ammunition wagons and provisions, aggregating several thousand dollars, were appropriated by the Government as contraband of war and Jose entered the Government service as a scout and guide, and by his subsequent faithful services more than atoned for his former mischief, for, thought more than half savage himself when captured, he became the friend of the white men and never betrayed a trust.

In this connection it is perhaps not inappropriate to make further mention of McKenzie's slaughter of the Indians' horses, which took place on the Tule, not far from the present town of Tulia, probably in 1873 or 1874, but this is said to have never been reported to the department, the General having acted upon his own initiative and responsibility, and in a manner calculated to effectively meet a dire emergency. This summary action came near getting the General, who according to the ideas of old buffalo hunters and ranchmen, was the best Indian fighter that ever operated in Texas, courtmartialed. The Indians, as already mentioned, were Comanches, and some of them had been on the reservation in the Indian Territory, while others had never been captured, but had been leading a nomadic, sub-tribe, marauding life, and for several years the reservation Indians had been slipping away, joining the Indians in Western Texas, committing all kinds of depredations and returning to the reservation when it suited their pleasure, and it was against these Indians that Gen. McKenzie inaugurated his famous campaign, which really lasted three years, beginning about 1870 and during which time he fought several battles, made the three

McKenzie trails on the northern plains and probably first traversed many other which have since taken his name. He never knew how many Indians were in the country nor what numbers he might encounter, so he always campaigned with a big force and one trip with his big train of heavy wagons was sufficient to make a trail that would remain for years, and those he traveled frequently now looked like great plowed furrows across the prairies.

When Jose guided McKenzie to the Indian camp in the Tule Canyon they were so surprised on finding themselves completely surrounded that they made but a feeble resistance. The capture was made near where the town of Claude, in Armstrong County, now stands, but the Indians were at once moved several miles west. The place where the Indians were under guard when the horses were killed is one of the most picturesque places in Western Texas. On either side of Tule Creek, a little stream of crystal water fed by perennial springs, its banks lined with willows, hackberries and other small timber, for a distance of three or four miles there is an impassable bluff from fifty to two or three hundred yards to half a mile wide, and by turning the Indians into this valley and placing a strong guard above and below them they were completely imprisoned.

From the hour of the capture Gen. McKenzie had had all the Indians' horses in his charge, but had never intimated his intentions as to their disposal. A grave condition confronted him and its solution was hardly within the province of humane methods. Without the horses the Indians were almost helpless and consequently harmless, with them in their possession or accessible to their recovery the proposition was reversed. His men had been dragged through a long and severe campaign and were worn out, and the Indians, realizing this fact and the superiority of their numbers, were insolent and rebellious, and it would take but a suggestion to incite them to make an attempt to recover their stock, and this done, all the efforts made to capture them would result in failure and perhaps a massacre. Besides, those horses had been the innocent instruments of untold trouble, hardships and suffering. It was the horses that enabled the Indian to quit the reservation, that enabled him to maraud throughout the country, play hide and seek with the Federal army and havoc with the settlers, and the Indian's covetousness for more horses was one strong incentive that led him into mischief. There was but one rational thing for the General to do, and he did it. Some people have criticised the

General for slaughtering so many horses, but any one that has ever seen an Indian, especially a Comanche Indian, handling a horse can applaud the killing of those horses by Gen. McKenzie as a humane act. If I had to be born a horse, the property of an Indian, I should consider myself extremely fortunate to die when a colt with a prolonged case of cramp colic.

Early on the morning of the slaughter, while the Indians were partaking of Government supplies in blissful ignorance of the impending catastrophe, the horses were rounded up in a wide valley a mile or so above the camp of the Indians, but out of their sight, owing to a bend in the cliffs bordering the creek, and here the slaughter took place. It is said that when the Indians heard the incessant fusillading they danced in glee, thanking other Indians had attacked McKenzie's soldiers, but when the real cause was conveyed to them they were dumfounded, their spirits were crushed, their insolence gone. Indian like, they suffered in silence, obeyed in humility and soon began their long march to the reservation which most of them had recently left well mounted and full of great anticipations. I heard an old buffalo hunter criticise McKenzie's action in killing the horses. He said it certainly looked like a shame to kill probably \$100,000 worth of innocent animals when there were an equal number of worthless ones so convenient. He admitted that it was necessary to do some killing, but thought the horses should have been exempted. The Indians had come along one night and borrowed about \$600 worth of horses from him and I suspected that he was slightly prejudiced.

I once went to the McKenzie "battle ground," as it is now known, for the purpose of getting a horse tooth and having it polished for a watch charm, but I couldn't find a tooth or bone, not even so much as the sliver from a hoof. Near the center of the killing grounds I found an elegant residence owned by Col. T. P. Rush, but he objected to me taking it away, so I departed souvenirless.

It has been intimated from authoritative sources and well supposed from circumstantial evidence that Jose was permitted to cut out and take away a considerable number of the best horses in the herd, as a compensation for his former loss and subsequent valuable service. Anyway, he disappeared soon after the horses were killed, his whereabouts was unknown for several months, then he returned with plenty of money and resumed his former labors under Gen. McKenzie, for whom he ever after possessed the highest esteem and the most loyal friendship.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LONE TREE FIGHT WITH COMANCHE INDIANS.

J. J. Clinton, now serving his eighth consecutive term as Chief of Police of Abilene, Texas, is one of the best known peace officers that has ever been identified with Western or frontier life. He has spent more than thirty-six years in Kansas and Western Texas, beginning as a guard accompanying the United States mails from Fort Davis, Texas, to Fort Bliss, near El Paso, in 1868, afterward working for several months on the noted King cattle ranch in Southern Texas, later an officer in Fort Dodge, Kan., at a time when that town was the metropolis of Western toughness, and going from there to Abilene, Texas, where he served for several months as Assistant City Marshal, after which he was elected Chief of Police, a position he has since held continuously. Clinton has participated in three of the most noted Indian fights that have ever taken place in Western Texas or Western Kansas, the first being the Fight for the Water Hole, as it is now known, which took place near the town of Van Horn, between Fort Davis and El Paso, in 1868, in which eight men under the leadership of Big Foot Wallace, the famous scout and Indian fighter, for thirty-six hours withstood the repeated assaults of more than 100 Comanche Indians, and with the loss of only one man, finally made their escape. He was afterward in the famous Adobe Walls fight, where thirty men withstood an attack of over 500 Kiowa, Comanche and Ara-



paho Indians, and two years later, in 1878, had his third and most remarkable Indian fight and escape. This was what is known as the Lone Tree fight, and occurred at a crossing on the Arkansas River about twenty miles from Dodge City. Clinton is a quiet, reserved man, averse to publicity and notoriety, and this is the first time he has ever been prevailed upon to give the particulars of the Lone Tree fight, which is among the most remarkable Indian fights on record, remarkable because one white man and twelve Mexicans got the best of a fight with about 200 Comanche Indians.

"In 1878 six herds of beef cattle were driven from the King ranch, in Southern Texas, to Dodge City, Kan., where they were delivered to buyers from the different Northern markets," said Mr. Clinton. "I was personally in charge of one of the herd and nominally in charge of all of them, all of the cattle belonging to one man. The cattle were not all delivered at Dodge at one time, but were delivered one herd at a time, and because of this fact, several days elapsed between the delivery of the first and the last herd. The undelivered herds were held as near Dodge as good grass and water would permit, the herd of which I had individual charge being held about forty miles from Dodge, and as fast as the other herds were delivered, the horses, chuck wagons, guns, ammunition and surplus supplies of various kinds were brought to my camp and left, as my herd was to be the last one delivered. Five of the herds had been delivered and a like disposition was to be made of the remaining one within a few days.

"I was then camped on Sand Creek, a small tributary of the Arkansas River, and had under my charge 2200 beef steers, six chuck wagons, about 150 saddle horses and, fortunately, an abundance of guns and ammunition, much of which belonged with the wagons that had been with the other herds. These guns and ammunition had been brought along to defend ourselves against Indians in Texas and not in view of any troubles that might arise in Kansas, for we anticipated none. The Indians were supposed to be friendly in that section of country, and in addition to this were presumably carefully guarded on the reservations. For several days after I went into camp on Sand Creek there had been rumors of hostile Indians breaking away from the reservation, but it was supposed that the trouble would not amount to much, as the authorities would be able to easily cope with it, though the reported outbreak be true. But I finally awoke from a sweet dream of peace to the realization

of a grave situation. One evening while hunting horses one of my men discovered an Indian trail, and this he followed until satisfied that there was a large body of the Indians, and that they were headed in the wrong direction for our personal welfare. The man followed the trail and investigated the situation until nightfall and then rode into camp as quickly as possible. The moon was shining very brightly, and it was an ideal night for Indians to go on a marauding expedition, for they always seemed to be superstitious of dark nights and studiously avoided them in planning their raids—a fact greatly in contrast to most of their deeds. All unconscious of the great dangers so close upon them, the men on herd guard were singing their Mexican songs to the peaceful cattle, while the men in camp were singing, dancing and playing a guitar, the one musical instrument nearly always present where there are any considerable number of Mexicans. The men were especially cheerful, anticipating that within a few days the cattle would be delivered at Dodge, after which they would have a few hours' high carnival and then start back to their homes in Texas. I had made my bed some distance from where the men were indulging in their jollifications and with the light of a lantern was reading a copy of *The Galveston News*, which had been brought to the camp by some of the extra wagons coming out from Dodge. The paper was about six months old, but its contents were all new and fresh to me. Just then the horse hunter galloped into camp, and, without speaking to the other men, came direct to me and related what he had discovered, enumerating in detail the investigations he had made and that he was positive there were more than 200 of the Indians.

"More unexpected or unwelcome news never fell on my ears, for I had never been less prepared for an emergency of the kind that now threatened me. Besides myself, two of the men in the crowd had been in the Adobe Walls fight, but not one of the others had ever been in a fight with the Indians and were probably poor marksmen, and I had no knowledge as to how far they could be relied upon in the event the Indians attacked us, as I was sure, from the report, that they would. It would not do to advise them of what had been discovered, as they might become panic-stricken, mount their horses and run away, leaving the wagons and herd without attendants, while they rushed into the worst possible complications; but time was precious and I must think fast and determine quickly. I knew that in such an open, exposed position the chances would be

against an equally small number of experienced Indian fighters, and that with a bunch of 'tender feet' resistance would be useless. I knew of only one place where we could find any kind of shelter under which to resist an attack, and that was the Lone Tree crossing on the Arkansas River, fully twenty miles from where we were camped, but I resolved to make for that place. I took the horse hunter into my confidence and fully confided to him my fears and plans, cautioning him not to intimate to any of the other men what he had discovered. He readily approved of my plans and assured me that he would follow my instructions in every respect. There is one thing about Mexicans when on the trail. They will obey orders at any hour, and, though they may suspect, they never question. I told him to go and tell the horse wrangler, who was the man guarding or herding the horses at night, to bring the horses to camp at once so the work mules could be caught and harnessed and the horses then thrown with the cattle. I then went to where the men were singing and dancing and told all, except the six drivers, to get on their horses, which were always staked near the camp to be used in case the cattle should make a run, and go to the herd and have the cattle rounded up and started down the trail, while I and the drivers proceeded to pile everything into the wagons. It was only a few minutes after the orders had been given until the mules had been caught, harnessed and hitched to the wagons. It was some distance to where the herd was bedded and naturally took some time to get the cattle roused up and started, which gave sufficient time for the wagons to be started in the lead of the cattle, which was as I desired.

"That is one night the vividness of which never escapes my retrospective moments. Had I been expecting trouble with the Indians or had been where they might be expected to harass me at any time I would not have been so taken unawares nor found so poorly prepared, and so far as we knew they might then be slipping upon us. The howl of every wolf and the screech of every owl chilled my blood, for I knew the deceptive mimic signals of the Indians, and mistrusted every sound I heard. It was such a sudden, unexpected transition from the cheerful to the extremely gloomy. Would we reach our destination before the Indians should make an attack, and if we succeeded in this, would those men prove true, keep cool, obey orders and fight? The moments dragged into a long night of

brain-racking, nerve-straining suspense, which was partially alleviated by the thought that possibly the Indians had some fixed purpose other than disturbing us, perhaps some objective point that would not lead them along our way.

"Daylight found us only a short distance from our destination, and on the edge of a long slope that descended to the river. I took my field glasses and carefully scanned the country in every direction, but saw no signs of Indians. I felt greatly relieved and virtually out of danger, so I had the herd turned off of the trail, the wagons stopped and breakfast prepared, for had the Indians intended attacking us they would certainly have done so during the night or been upon us, or at least in sight, by daylight. After breakfast the wagons moved along, the herd was thrown on the trail again and, being thirsty and smelling water, traveled in a swift walk. My feelings of security were now almost as great as my uneasiness had been during the night, the bright, cheerful morning had dispelled the gloomy forebodings of the men and they again began singing their lively Spanish songs, which commingled with the chatterings and whistling of the flocks of cowbirds and field larks which always hovered about. But notwithstanding this feeling I did not cease to be vigilant. When about six miles from the river I saw, with the aid of my glasses, what seemed to be a cloud of smoke or dust a considerable distance back the trail we had traveled during the night, and after watching it very closely for several minutes, discerned a large body of horsemen, apparently Indians, rapidly approaching. All my fears and apprehensions returned, for I was sure we were being followed and that a fight was certain, and that the only sensible thing to do was to make arrangements accordingly. All the men with the cattle were warned, the herd thrown from the trail and we rushed to the wagons, which had already reached the bank of the river, and began making all possible preparations to resist an attack. Where the fight occurred the river makes a small but almost perfect horseshoe bend, and fortunately for us, there was a heavy rise, the red, muddy waters whirling and swirling from bank to bank, and for a man to have ventured into that flood would have meant certain destruction, consequently the Indians could not cross the river and get in our rear, but must make a front attack. Another fortunate circumstance was that the Indians did not charge the wagons immediately, but dashed into the herd and spent several minutes killing cattle and endeavoring to stampede the horses, and this

respite enabled us to make many necessary preparations to give them a warm reception.

"The wagons were drawn in a semi-circle across the crossing, the mules were unhitched, but not unharnessed, and turned loose, and bedding, boxes, sacks of flour and everything that would in any degree turn bullets and serve as a breastworks was piled under the wagons and between the spokes, and a few yards back of this we dug a small ditch, which was not a very difficult job, owing to the soft, sandy character of the soil, and in this ditch we took refuge, knowing the wagons would break the force of a charge. Owing to the large number of extra guns and the great amount of ammunition, each man went into the trench with from three to eight loaded guns and several extra rounds of ammunition, yet there were nearly two hundred of the Indians well armed and well mounted, and I really had no hopes of making a successful defense. Ten of my men had never been in an Indian fight, were excited and scared—in fact, almost panic-stricken. Had they all been experienced Indian fighters I should not have been at all apprehensive as to the outcome. I told the men that their lives depended upon their coolness and courage and the amount of execution they did; that they must obey my orders and must not shoot until I gave the order to do so and then shoot to kill.

"After the Indians tired of killing cattle, they rode to a point where they could be easily seen from our intrenchment, and about fifty of them left the main body, riding slowly and shooting occasionally. Then, breaking into a fast run, whooping, yelling and firing an almost continuous volley, they came dashing toward us. I glanced along the line of men on either side of me and felt considerably relieved, for their fear and excitement had given way to grim determination. Every gun was in readiness, every eye was glancing down a gun barrel pointed at the approaching demons and not a nerve seemed to quiver. The Indians' fire was not returned until they approached close enough for us to do proper execution. I then gave the command to fire and every gun boomed at once, and the men continued to shoot as fast and accurately as possible. This checked, but did not stop the Indians, who made a desperate effort to pass the wagons, but the steep banks of the river and the high water stopped them, after which they resorted to their circling tactics, but we killed so many of their number and horses that they soon beat a hasty retreat. They left sixteen dead horses just in front of our wagons, but sue-

ceeded in carrying away all dead and wounded Indians. They had inflicted severe punishment upon us. Juan Gonzales, one of the men who had been with me in the Adobe Walls fight, and upon whom I placed my greatest reliance in this trouble, was killed; another one of the men was mortally wounded, and I was slightly crippled in the arm.

"As it afterward developed, Dull Knife, chief of the Comanches and one of the worst products that tribe ever produced, was in charge of this band, and the failure of the first attempt not only enraged him, but made him more cunning and cautious. He sent one body of Indians to the left and another to the right, both bunches protecting themselves as much as possible by creeping from one sandhill or small mound to another until they got within range of the wagons and then began mercilessly shelling our position, and continued to do so for a considerable time. Once in a while we could get in a shot, but for the most part we were more than content to lay low in the ditch. As a result of this assault, the wagon sheets were riddled and torn to pieces, the bedding and boxes under the wagons were filled with holes, while thousands of bullets whistled over us, but not one of our party was scratched.

"After some time the flanking parties ceased firing and occasionally displayed themselves in a manner calculated to draw our fire, but I understood their scheme and did not fall into their plans. The main body of the Indians was still in our front and their idea was to have us empty our guns, waste our ammunition and concentrate our attention on the flanking parties, and at a time when we were unprepared and off our guard they would dash upon us. The wary old chief, realizing that his ruse had failed, decided to make a desperate, overpowering effort, so he signaled the flanking parties to keep up a continuous fire while he with the main body came charging toward us. It was a magnificent and awe-inspiring spectacle, those hundred or more Indians in war paint and plumes, mounted on beautiful, fleet-footed horses, five or six feet apart, in single line, yelling, brandishing their guns and riding at full speed toward us, while the bullets of the flanking parties whistled above and rained about us. We gave no heed to the flanking parties, but as soon as the main body got reasonably close, turned loose on them. At our first volley a number of Indians and horses went down, the others halted and seemed confused, but while our bullets spat and whistled among them they closed their ranks, began firing and came dashing on.

It looked as though they would succeed in passing the wagons, but our fire was so rapid, constant and destructive that when only a few feet from the wagons they wheeled and once more beat a hasty retreat, leaving nine dead Indians and several dead horses in sight. We had sustained no damages other than a few other additional bullet holes in the wagon beds, wagon sheets, bedding and boxes. It was now getting late in the evening, the men, who had not slept for thirty-six hours were becoming exhausted, discouraged and demoralized, the ammunition in the ditch was getting scarce, and as the Indians soon approached again and began firing rapidly, it was impossible to send a man to the wagons for a fresh supply, so we simply lay quiet, awaited developments and trusted to chance. Under cover of their heavy fire a few of the Indians would dash up, tie a rope around the foot of a dead Indian and drag him away. I then understood that they had enough of the fight for the present at least, and that what they now wanted was to carry away their dead. It was certainly a temptation to shoot these adventurous redskins, but I held the Mexicans down by telling them that if they killed any more of them it would only make matters worse, for the Indians would have their dead or harass us all night, and a daylight fight was all we could attend to properly.

"When night came the dead had all been taken away and not an Indian was to be seen, but knowing what to expect, we stood guard all night, and a solemn, gloomy vigil it was. Behind the trench lay the dead man wrapped in a blanket, the wounded man moaned in agony, while his companions ministered to his sufferings in every way possible under the circumstances, and my wound was paining me considerably. The bullet riddled wagon sheets flapped about the broken bows, and every breath of wind whispered a mournful dirge. Save the lashing waters, the moans of the dying man, the occasional whisper, an oppressive silence reigned and the very air seemed charged with impending disaster.

"Daylight came at last, but not an Indian was in sight, only our own horses and cattle scattered throughout the valley, along the hillside and the river banks. About sunrise the wounded man died and we buried both the dead men on the right bank of the river near the spot they had sacrificed their lives defending. We then prepared breakfast, after which we rounded up the stock, and the river having fallen sufficiently, crossed the herd and reached Fort Dodge late in the evening.

"The Indians had killed about two hundred head of our

cattle and several horses, and these, added to their own dead stock, made a field of carnage that ought to have at least partially satisfied a savage's thirst for slaughter.

"While on the Fort Sill reservation some time after the Lone Tree fight I became acquainted with Sun Boy, a sub chief and participant in the Lone Tree fight, and got some information from him that I had longed to obtain. I asked him why they had not molested us during the night or at least kept us in siege for some time, and he said it was because they had escaped from the reservation, knew the soldiers would follow them and consequently they had no time to tarry long in one place. He would scarcely believe me when I told him that after their first charge I had only eleven men left, and that when they dashed so near to the wagons the second time I was sure we were gone. He said the number of wagons and the rapidity with which we fired caused the Indians to think there were at least forty in our crowd, and consequently they were not anxious to pass the wagons and engage in a hand to hand encounter. He then asked me how eleven men could load their guns so quickly and fire so rapidly, and when I told him that each man had from three to eight guns he looked like the victim of a lost opportunity, grunted a few times and then said: 'Huh, you fool Injun! Heap gun, shoot all time. Injun think him heap cowboys; get scared, go way! Huh, d—n!'

"And when I further told him that nine of the men left after the first charge were tenderfeet and had never been in an Indian fight, the 'noble red man' seemed humiliated beyond endurance, but presently his face lighted up as though a revelation had come to his rescue and after a few grunts and chuckles he said:

"'Maybe so you talk heap lie to me all time. Him no tenderfoots. Tenderfoots no shoot like that. Tenderfoot shoot all time, no hit much. Cowboy heap shoot, hit all time. Him cowboys. You no fool me,' and I never convinced him to the contrary."



## CHAPTER X.

### FRONTIER TOWNS AND EARLY DAY RANCHES.

The buffalo range in Texas (which has been covered in previous articles) was not so extensive as the scope of country which will be covered in the sketches of the cattle business. For instance, the buffalo range did not extend west of the Pecos River, nor did the operations of the hunters approach nearer than one hundred miles of the Rio Grande River. If you will draw a line north and south from the Red River to the southeast corner of Taylor County, and thence directly southwest to the Rio Grande River, west of these lines you will have a map of the country a brief history of which is embraced in the subsequent sketches in this series, the period of time covered being from 1876 to the present.

"Westward the star of empire takes its way." The cowman did the same thing until there wasn't any westward left, and that accounts for him being where he is to-day, hemmed in by circumstances and surrounded by actual settlers. In point of transformations and evolutions the cattle business is without a counterpart. First there was the open range and free grass; then the overcrowded range and the contest for existence, followed by the lease law and the wire fence and partial disintegration. It has passed through booms and collapses, prosperity and depressions; years of drouths and poverty, disastrous drifts and die-nps; seasons of green pastures and big profits. It has progressed from

the common scrub to the thoroughbred; from the wild speculative sphere to a scientific industry, and the purpose of the sketches to follow is to treat of these phases of an industry still extant and vastly important, but scarcely recognizable when compared with itself of a few years ago.

In 1876 there were less than forty ranches of any consequence in the vast scope of country previously designated—embracing more than ninety counties and containing above 100,000 square miles, and in which territory the county officials to-day more than exceed the total population of 1876. At that time there was not a railroad in Texas west of Fort Worth; ranch supplies were hauled hundreds of miles, ranchmen seldom got their mail more than two or three times a year, and seldom, or never, saw a newspaper. Grass and water were free and wire fences unknown; cattle were cheap and good cow ponies valuable; wages were high and cattle were driven a distance of 500 to 1,000 miles to market; but at even that early day there were a few typical frontier towns in Western Texas, all of them having come into existence as Government posts or buffalo hunters' supply camps.

Of all frontier towns in Western Texas, Fort Griffin easily took precedence in every respect. To chronicle every interesting, important or sensational event that transpired in Fort Griffin during its ten years of furious existence would require a volume of vast bulk, and its pages, literally speaking, would be stained with blood, made hilarious with real humor, gruesome with cold facts, and filled with thrilling romance. The place came into existence as a Government post about 1869, and within a few months a multifarious element had congregated there. Saloons, dance halls, boarding houses, livery stables and general mercantile establishments prospered, sometimes one establishment combining all these interests within the scope of its operations. At the time the town was founded there were a few big cattle ranches in that section of country and others were established within the next few years, and these, together with the Government troops, made the place an important frontier town from its birth to within a short time of its demise, but it was from 1874 to 1877, during the prime of the buffalo slaughter, that Fort Griffin reached the zenith of its peculiar glory. Gamblers, outlaws and crooks of every character commingled with the cosmopolitan population of the commercial metropolis of the West. Refugees from justice flourished, assumed names were numerous, and gambling was a leading industry. Killings were frequent, but tears were few, and thefts and robberies were such common occur-

rences that the town finally got a bad name. One cold, dismal night a vigilance committee got out of bed and went about town serenading several undesirable characters and doing imitation missionary work with several others. The Halloween pranks of this vigilance committee attracted attention throughout the country, and was the subject of some unfavorable comment in Fort Griffin. The next day the Coroner declared a legal holiday to enable the merchants to close their places of business and sit on the juries of investigation or assist in burying the investigated, while several highly accomplished toughs left the town as per special request. Finally the vigilance committeemen got into a misunderstanding among themselves and went into voluntary liquidation to avoid hanging each other. The vigilance committee lost its good character in a somewhat peculiar manner. At first it was composed of men who wanted to see the law of common decency enforced and simple justice prevail, but it was such a popular institution that its membership soon embraced every man in that section of country, and it was then noticed that there was an increase in meanness contrary to the statutes, peace and dignity of the vigilance committee, and an investigation revealed the fact that a majority of its own members were engaged in violating the by-laws and constitution of the order. Friction arose, plots and counter plots multiplied and whenever the committee met in executive session to execute one of its own members, some one would offer a substitute to the original motion to the effect that the author of the allegations against the accused be adjudged guilty. This would bring up the previous question, and then each member would arise to a point of personal privilege, after which the meeting would adjourn to give the Coroner the use of the meeting place to hold the inquests. Several important lodge secrets became public, and it began to look as though the minority was going to bolt the ticket and go into the courts and ask that a receiver be appointed to wind up the affairs of the institution; whereupon there was a specially called session and the committee unanimously dissolved. Some of the best men in the country belonged to this vigilance committee, and it deserves credit for having done more good than harm, but like all organizations of the kind it did enough harm to make it ashamed of itself.

The Government abandoned the post at Fort Griffin in 1879, the buffalo slaughter had ended, and when the Texas Central Railroad was completed into Albany in 1881, Fort Griffin became a place of scarcely noticeable importance, and a sadly neglected

grave yard now marks the spot where stood the erstwhile wonder of the West, the town where Bill Gilson and his sawed-off shotgun "Betsy," acting in the capacity of "Constable of Precinct No. 1, Shackelford and fifteen attached counties, Texas, and City Marshal at Fort Griffin, U. S. A.," upheld the peace and dignity of the State.

Albany itself is a pretty old town, and was the first county seat of Shackelford County, and as such has some early history that would look like the battlefield records of a civil war. In fact, for a number of years several thousand square miles of Western Texas and the Panhandle country was attached to Shackelford County for judicial purposes, but for some time about all the District Court had to do in criminal matters was to instruct the Grand Jury to investigate and ascertain what disposition the vigilance committee had made of the last batch of prisoners.

Buffalo Gap was the first county seat of Taylor County, and few towns can delve into as short a past and produce a more interesting record. It was established in the early 70's and flourished during the buffalo slaughter and early days of the cattle business. Here the cowpuncher ran wild and Western freedom basked in her native element. Here justice was dispensed according to Western jurisprudence. Here many a sob went unsighed and many a funeral passed as a current joke. Here local lawyers "fixed" the juries before which Sam Lanham, then District Attorney, wept for justice and pleaded that the laws be enforced. But the Texas and Pacific Railroad missed Buffalo Gap about fifteen miles and built up Abilene, to which place the county seat was soon moved, and about all that was left of Buffalo Gap was its former location.

There were a great many supply stations established on the buffalo range during the slaughter, but nearly all of them were temporary and flourished only so long as there were enough hunters in that vicinity to maintain a profitable business. These supply camps generally consisted of a big tent, some coarse clothing, such as buffalo hunters used, a lot of flour, bacon, salt, ply camps belonged to big concerns that were engaged on an extensive scale in supplying the hunters and were places where hides were bought or taken in exchange for supplies. Only one town in Western Texas had its origin as a supply camp, and that is Snyder, in Scurry County, but for a while Reynolds City, on the Clear Fork of the Brazos, in Stonewall County, was the commercial star of the buffalo hunter's domain.

Reynolds City was established as a supply camp by Rath & tobacco and a barrel of "self-replenishing" whisky. These supplied Reynolds in 1876. It was a convenient point for the entire buffalo range, and a few cattle ranches were located in the surrounding country. For two years the town enjoyed a boom unprecedented in Western Texas at that time, and then it collapsed. At one time Reynolds City could boast of several substantial buildings and three or four big general mercantile establishments, a number of saloons, a Chinese laundry, a hotel and a livery stable, point with pride to a considerable graveyard and brag about its healthful climate. Reynolds City's days were few, but they were full of incident. It made a reputation throughout the country, threatened to usurp the commercial prestige and the able-bodied mortuary record of Dodge City, but when two years of age an event came to pass which blighted the fair flower in the fullness of its bloom. The booming of the hunters' guns was superseded by a gloomy silence, and instead of the thunderous tread of the stampeded buffalo herd there was only the moan of the sighing winds; and then Reynolds City was deserted, and so completely, too, that almost its name has disappeared from the memory of man.

Snyder, which was originally known as Hide Town, but was afterward named in honor of "Uncle" Pete Snyder, the first man to permanently engage in business there, was always a peaceable burg; but notwithstanding this remarkable fact, as a result of which it possesses scarcely a trace of ancient historic interest, it has survived and is to-day one of the most thriving inland towns in Texas.

Tascosa was a terror, and as a memento of its early prosperity in that respect it to-day has a cemetery known as "Boot Hill," where slumber twenty-seven men who expired suddenly as a result of carelessly fooling with loaded guns in other men's hands. The town was established about 1876 as a trading point on the cattle trail that led into Colorado and the Northwest, and is situated on the north bank of the Canadian River, near where the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad crosses that stream. It was for a long time the banner cattle town of the Panhandle, its prime days being from 1877 to 1888. It is now the county seat of Oldham County, and is a quiet, well-behaved little burg.

Mobeetie, the present county seat of Wheeler County, is another town made famous by buffalo hunters, soldiers, cow-punchers and funerals. And there is Fort Chadbourne, in Run-

ncls County, and Belle Plain, in Callahan County: Fort Concho (now San Angelo) and Fort Stockton, nestling among the Davis Mountains in Pecos County, the histories of which would virtually be on a par with that of the frontier towns to which passing reference has already been made.

To appreciate the object in mentioning these frontier towns the reader must bear in mind that in 1876 they were the only towns in what we will now call the cattle range of Texas, a scope of country larger than the State of Kansas.

John Goff, a noted buffalo hunter, is said to have been the first man to locate a bunch of cattle west of Shackelford County. This was in the winter of 1873, and the cattle, 200 2-year-old heifers, were first ranged on Tonkawa Creek, in Stonewall County, and the following year in the same vicinity One Armed Jim Reed located the famous Horseshoe ranch and erected a big stone house which he arranged not only for a residence, but for a fort as well. It was probably in the same year that the Lee-Scott Cattle Company moved a big herd of cattle from New Mexico and established what is now known as the L S ranch, their headquarters at that time being about fifteen miles south of Tascosa, and Don Pedro Perea, afterward delegate to Congress from New Mexico, and a Mr. Duran moved more than 100,000 head of sheep into the northwestern part of the State about the same year and ranged them in that section until 1885. J. B. Matthews and Judge Lynch began ranching in Shackelford County about 1855, as did the Reynolds and Millets in Throckmorton County a few years later, but these ranches were not properly within the province of these sketches.

Over on the Concho and along the Colorado rivers there were the ranches of Captain Ike Mullin, R. K. Wylie, Colonel T. L. Odom, and Sam R. and Mody Coggins. On the Jim Ned and Hords Creek, tributaries of the Concho, in Coleman, Reynolds and Callahan counties, were the ranches of Jim Jackson, Clay Mann, G. K. Elkins, W. B. (Uncle Smokey) Brown, the Windhams, Jim Barton, Tom Clark, W. C. Dunn and Sam Gholson. Sam C. Wilkes had a ranch on Rough Creek, near Jim Ned and DeLong, a noted Indian fighter, had a considerable ranch at Lipan Springs, in Tom Green County. Carter & Grounds had a big ranch in Mulberry Canyon on the Elm Fork, in the western part of Taylor County, and John N. Simpson had established the Hash Knife ranch near where the town of Abilene now stands, on Cedar.

I do not know the dates when these ranches were estab-

lished, but all of them previous to 1876. John Chisum was the pioneer cowman in that section, having established a ranch near Fort Chadbourne in 1862, but he moved his stock to New Mexico about 1871, and R. F. Tankersley, the pioneer ranchman on the South Concho, located near the head of that stream in 1864 or 1865. These constituted the principal ranches in Western Texas at that time, and while there were a few small ranches and settlers as far west as the Tankersley ranch in the Concho country and the Reed ranch in Stonewall as early as 1876 it would be impossible to enumerate them now; besides, they were not sufficiently numerous to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business just after an Indian raid, and had to act upon their own responsibility.

After 1876 ranches began to multiply in the West and were soon considerably in each other's way, and now we come to that point where there was a contest for existence, the sheepmen and the actual settler, the man with the hoe and the cotton planter, being the contestants.

## CHAPTER XI.

### BEGINNING OF THE RANCHING ERA PROPER.

By the close of 1876 quite a number of cattle ranches were located throughout the section of country with which this series of sketches deals, but these ranches were so badly scattered that a man visiting them in rotation could not make an average of one ranch per day. In some localities there would be a neighborhood where neighbors lived only fifteen, twenty or thirty miles apart, but between these ranch communities there would probably be a scope of country for a hundred or so miles totally uninhabited and on which not an animal grazed. Few of these ranches had been established as far west as the Staked Plains, and none of them in that section of the country, now the banner stock raising section of the State, in fact, the banner stock raising section of the United States in so far as what may be termed the open range interest is concerned; and at the close of 1878 the country was still sparsely settled even from the standpoint of cattlemen, who didn't like neighbors. There were still a few buffaloes in the country, though they were in small bunches and seldom seen, and Indian raids were not infrequent. Ranchmen, crowded from the overstocked ranges of Southern Texas, or forced by the influx of the agricultural classes to leave Central Texas, continued locating ranches west of Stephens County, and in 1880 there was some complaint about the Western Texas range being overstocked, but these complaints were founded more upon fear than fact, for there were thousands of acres



then unoccupied and unutilized. There was grass and water enough for all, but as "coming events cast a shadow," the cowman in Western Texas saw a ghostlike indication that didn't look well to him, and he sought to vanish it with a tale of woe, but the fellow crowded from some other section of the country was hurt and seared, too, and tales of woe had no terrors for him, so he went further west, and selected a place to camp, assumed squatter sovereignty over a water hole and claimed dominion over the country for miles around. Of course it was only a matter of time until these cattle kings would become involved in personal complications.

Water was the great factor in overcrowding the range in Western Texas, and was consequently the cause of most trouble and the object of most contention. Few ranchmen owned an acre of land, consequently there were no permanent improvements. As late as 1892 there were no tanks, no windmills, no wells and no water except the natural supply, and this was limited to no considerable number of streams, such as the Brazos, Canadian, Concho, Colorado and Pecos rivers, and their few tributaries. Consequently the ranches were along these streams. When rains were abundant and the lakes and small creeks full of water the cattle would scatter over the country, and then there was sufficient range for all. It was not until 1885, however, that the overcrowded condition of the range and the cowman's lack of proper preparation resulted fatally; but as this feature is taken up in a subsequent chapter, no further reference will be made to it here.

The following narrative was given to me by one of the best known cattlemen in Western Texas, and serves better than any statements I could make or facts I might compile, to illustrate the character of the country and conditions of the cattle business from the early part of 1877 to the beginning of 1882:

"In 1876-77 quite a number of buffalo hunters realizing that the buffalo slaughter was about over, began to select locations for cattle ranches, but so far as the cattle history of the country may be considered, there was none in the territory west of Taylor County and north of the present line of the Texas and Pacific Railroad previous to 1878. There were probably a few ranches in that part of the country at that time, but I have no personal recollections concerning them.

"I put in the most of the year 1877 hauling buffalo hides and meat to Fort Griffin, thus winding up my part of the buffalo slaughter, and in February, 1878, decided to engage in the busi-

ness of capturing mustang horses, for which purpose I built a big corral near the head of California Creek, in Stonewall County. At that time there were thousands of these animals in the country, and it appeared that capturing them would be a very lucrative business, but three months' experience demonstrated to me the contrary, for all isn't gold that glitters, and everything that has a bushy tail and mane isn't by any means a standard-bred equine. I don't know of anything that has been more overrated than 'the beautiful, fleet-footed mustang.' He was the degenerate progeny of inferior sires, and inbreeding had destroyed about all the vitality he ever possessed. It was a very rare thing that a mustang ever gave services in any degree commensurate with the trouble and expense of capturing him, for they would nearly exhaust themselves before they could be captured, and what strength and vitality they had left would be expended in resisting the efforts of man to tame and handle them. With nearly every bunch of mustangs there would be a few Indian ponies or horses and mules that had escaped from the Government troops or the buffalo hunters. These animals were generally of respectable quality and reasonable value, and to their capture we devoted most of our efforts. Where and when the mustang originated is a subject upon which I would not hazard a conjecture, nor have I ever seen any treatise on the matter which I considered reasonable or authentic. I do know that by 1882 experience had thoroughly demonstrated the worthlessness of the mustang, and ranchmen began killing them by the hundreds to get them out of the way, as they were not only grass consumers, but caused much annoyance, owing to the fact that gentle horses would frequently take up with them and soon become the wildest, most unmanageable animals in the bunch.

"Our method of handling the mustangs was the same as that generally adopted and so often described. There were four of us, and we had several good corn-fed horses, which were, of course, much stronger than the grass-fed mustangs. Much has been said and written about walking down a bunch of mustangs, but I never saw any that had much walk about them until they had become so exhausted that they couldn't strike a trot. After starting a bunch of mustangs it was necessary to keep them constantly moving until they became worn-out and susceptible of partial control. A saddle horse would become attracted to a bunch of mustangs, and would follow them day and night, and in this way when the night was too dark for the man to see the

bunch, his saddle horse would do the work of seeing for him. One man would follow the bunch about twelve hours, when he would be relieved by another, and thus the pursuit would continue until the creatures had reached that condition where the four of us could land them in the corral, and it was here that we put the corn-fed strength of our saddle horses to the final test. I think the mustang was the original stamper, for every time the rider would approach them they would give that inimitable snort, which was really a kind of coarse, double-action whistle, and go on a dead run for a considerable distance, and they would continue these antics until they were no more than able to shamble along. Sometimes we would concentrate our efforts to capture some especial beauty, and after three or four days' hard labor would get him, only to find that the coveted prize was a mass of flowing mane and tail, glittering color and diminutive body. During the three months we captured twenty-eight head, most of them Government mules and escaped saddle horses, the entire bunch being worth about \$1,800, and as this about cleaned up that character of stock, so far as we were able to ascertain, we abandoned the mythical mustang beauty business to engage in more lucrative pursuits, for there was no considerable remuneration in capturing the escaped saddle horses and work mules, and none at all in fooling with mustangs.

"While buffalo hunting in the Double Mountain country in 1876, I selected a location for a cattle ranch, and in June, 1879, I went to San Saba County, and got a herd of 1,200 cattle, which were placed on the ranch previously selected. I was just east of the Plains, and not far from the north line of what is now Borden County, but we knew nothing about county boundaries at that time. There was not a ranch west of me, but twenty-five miles north was the Lan C ranch, and several miles east of that was the Curry Comb ranch, both of which, I think, were established in the latter part of 1878, while several miles north of the Curry Comb ranch J. B. and W. B. Slaughter had a big ranch, and Clay Mann, G. K. Elkins and Uncle Smoky Brown were soon located some distance east of my ranch. In 1879 the 22 outfit established their ranch in the southeast corner of Crosby County, and George Womack established the Diamond Cross ranch near the center of the present county lines of Kent and Garza counties in the same year. In the early part of 1880 John Beal established the Buckle B ranch on the Colorado River, in the southern part of Borden County, Willis Holloway located at the springs on Bull Creek, and John Powers

established the J. Buckle ranch on the Double Mountain Fork, about thirty-five miles east of my place. Doak Good was hid among the recesses of the Yellow House Canyon, and the Nunn Brothers had a big ranch in Scurry County, I think. In all that country west of Fisher and lying between the present Texas & Pacific and the Fort Worth & Denver railroads there might have been a few more ranches other than those mentioned, but if so I do not recall them at present. After 1880, however, ranches began to multiply very rapidly, and it was only about three years until the whole western country was overstocked.

"I suppose Doak Good was the first man to locate a ranch as far west as the foot of the Plains, and in what year he located his little ranch in the Yellow House Canyon I do not know, but it was probably in the early part of 1878.

"As late as 1879 there were still a considerable number of buffaloes in the country, but not enough to justify buffalo hunters killing them for profit, for they were in small bunches, very wild, and scattered over a vast territory. In those days the cowman's principal occupation was line riding, that is, riding around the boundaries of his range, in order to keep his cattle within their proper limits, and to keep the buffaloes out, for domestic cattle would frequently fall in with a bunch of them and drift away. Indians caused considerable annoyance in my section of country in 1879, stealing horses, but no clashes of any consequence occurred between them and the whites. Game of all kinds was abundant, but the only instance in this connection which I deem worthy of any attention at present was the departure of the gray wolves from my section of country in 1880.

"Early one morning about the middle of February I was riding along the edge of the Plains a short distance from the cap rock when I saw a long string of objects coming out of the canyon and heading in a northwesterly course across the Plains. Anxious to see what it was, I hurried along and soon got close enough to see, to my astonishment, that they were gray wolves. It was, of course, impossible to ascertain the number with any degree of accuracy, but there must have been several thousand of them. They were perhaps twenty abreast, were strung along for a distance of two or three miles, and were traveling in a sweeping trot. I rode up to within a few yards and began shooting into them with my pistol, but this created no consternation in their ranks, nor did they do as hungry wolves are supposed to always do—stop and devour such as were killed or crippled, for I know I killed two, and might have crippled several. While

I was shooting they veered from me a short distance, forming a kind of semi-circle, but the line was never broken nor the gait they were traveling changed. On the same day other parties saw what was evidently the same pack crossing the Yellow House, still traveling in a sweeping trot and headed northwest. It is hardly reasonable to suppose that any considerable portion of these wolves came from any particular section of country, many of them having probably come from the country a hundred or so miles south. If similar bands were ever seen leaving the country, I never heard of it, but I do not remember having seen a gray wolf in this country after that year, until they began drifting back, presumably from Indian Territory and the mountain regions, in 1885. There were probably a few of them here and there at all times, but I did not see them nor hear of any mischief they had done. Whether these wolves were following the buffaloes, or were governed and directed by some instinct of another kind, is an inscrutable mystery to me. It is a well-known fact that squirrels and a few other animals not classed as migratory animals do migrate in large bodies, but the gray wolf prefers to sneak around alone or with a small, select crowd, usually his own family, and I suppose this is the first instance where they were known to migrate in a large, harmonious body.

"The first herd of cattle I ever saw passing through that part of the country to cross the plains was the D Z herd, owned by Jim Newman, and in charge of Joe Stokes. This was in the early part of 1880, and the cattle were being driven to Running Water, in the northwestern part of the plains. Many herds passed through that section of country going into Kansas, but this is the first herd of which I have any personal knowledge crossing the plains.

"In 1882 the buffaloes entirely disappeared from Western Texas, and during that year several big herds of cattle were moved into my section of country and all land on which there was any water was held by some one as a 'range right.' Several more big outfits crowded into the country during 1883 and 1884, and by the winter of 1884 the range was badly crowded and the grass so eaten and trampled, especially along the water courses, that the first big die-up occurred on the range in that portion of Western Texas.

"Some of the toughest characters ever known have at some time or another lived or rendezvoused in Western Texas. We find them harassing the buffalo hunters and they keep us com-

pany down to a somewhat recent date, but always operating in some section of country or particular community where there was no law or where they were shielded from its effect.

"The first outlaws to invade the extreme western portion of the State were from New Mexico, but the buffalo hunters were followed by professional horse thieves, who would steal horses and mules and drive them into Kansas, where they found a ready and profitable market. Horse stealing was regarded by the old-timer as the most heinous and excuseless of crimes, and death was the penalty inexorably fixed. In those days horses were scarce and valuable, average serviceable animals being worth from \$100 to \$150, and losing them subjected the owner to great loss and inconvenience. Such a loss put a stop to the operations of the buffalo hunter until his horses or mules could be recovered or replaced, and might easily mean the loss of an entire hunting season. Such loss left the buffalo hunter afoot, probably miles from any other camp, and at the mercy of the Indians and circumstances. Horse stealing affected the buffalo hunter but little, if any, more seriously than it did the cowman, for horses were an absolute necessity in conducting a cow ranch. There was no law to give protection, and drastic treatment was the frontiersman's only effective remedy.

"All things considered, death for horse theft was a very humane punishment at that time.

"But toughs of the toughest kind were found around the frontier towns and embraced every kind from the tin-horn gambler, sneak thief, robber and pickpockets to the professional gambler and expert killer. This class of citizenship was a considerable and, in many cases, predominating element in every town that flourished during the 'palmy days in the West.' First such toughs were around the Government posts, then the buffalo hunters' supply camps, and during the cattle boom era, from 1882 to 1885, every town in Western Texas was to a greater or less extent afflicted with this undesirable element. In most of the Western towns everything was 'wide open,' and one that could not number among its business institutions all kinds of gambling, a dance hall or two, and from one to two or three dozen saloons was considered a 'bum berg.'

"The character of a cow outfit generally corresponded with the character of the party for whom the outfit worked. A good man generally employed good men, while a hard citizen always employed men who would best serve his evil purposes. Some of the most noted cattle 'barons' were nothing more than a lot of prosperous thieves, and always kept a bunch of scoundrels

around them. Of course, good men would sometimes be found working for a tough outfit, and a tough man sometimes working for an honorable gentleman, but in either instance the arrangement was temporary and resulted from necessity. All was not love among the old-time cowmen, for there was a great deal of friction, a great many conflicts, most of which came up over grass and water, but the festive maverick was a potent factor. Whenever a fellow got so expert or hoggish that he could steal more cattle and spread around over more country that didn't belong to anybody than all of his enighbors could, he was apt to become unpopular. Cattle stealing was a sort of common custom, and so long as everybody did equally well at it there was peace and prosperity, but whenever some strenuous individual began to monopolize and concentrate this lucrative feature of the cattle business into his own hands there was certain to be a great complaint throughout the land, and the first thing he knew a reform would be holding an indignation meeting not far from his headquarters. At first self-preservation and plenty of room made friends of all, but when the common enemy had been exterminated and the cowmen began to get in each other's way, there were the natural results of competition.

No attempt was made to establish ranches on the Llano Estacado, or Staken Plains, until after the general introduction of wire fences, which was about 1883, and there was no extensive effort to establish ranches on the plains until it was accidentally discovered that water was to be obtained there at very shallow depths and that earthen tanks could be made to hold water better than any other kind of reservoirs.

Next to solving the water question on the plains, the discovery of the fact that milo maize and Kaffir corn were especially adapted to that high altitude and dry climate has been the most important factor in bringing that part of the country to a high state of utility.

## CHAPTER XII.

### BIRTH AND COLLAPSE OF THE GREAT CATTLE BOOM.

The great cattle boom, which began in 1882 and collapsed in 1896, has never been surpassed in any line of business nor in any section of country, but it is needless to devote any considerable amount of space to considering the cause of the boom nor the result of the crash that followed. It was in the days of railroad building, town booms, agricultural El Dorados and live stock fanaticism. The advance in the price of cattle in 1881 was in all probability due to natural, legitimate trade demands, but the balloon-like ascension of prices that followed was only a boom, and like all booms, took more for toll than it had received for grinding. The whole West was in the throes of a wild financial debauch—a revel of sorrow-breeding indiscretion—and the mirage of plenty lured the rainbow chasers into the desert of death. Elated by the intoxicating influence of fickle prosperity men dallied with the voluptuous follies of the present and never gave one sane thought to the future, and only awoke to a realization of their errors when the earthquake of adversity opened chasms into which their hopes and fortunes tumbled.

The very condition of things at the beginning of the great cattle boom was calculated to produce spasms of enthusiasm that would dwarf men's business judgment. For years the country had been flooded with fabulous, dime-novel stories of the great cattle industry of Texas and of the waiting resources and un-



utilized opportunities, and when trunk line railroads were constructed through the hitherto uninhabited sections of the West, giving direct connections with the outside world and affording means by which persons of refinement, having plenty of money and accustomed to lives of ease, could make pleasure jaunts into the land of grass, sunshine, cows and vastness and inspect for themselves the country about which they had heard so much, they came, saw, marveled and thought they understood, but they didn't. These men came attended by all the conveniences and comforts wealth could afford. They made long excursions through the cattle country, and into the "Far West," where as yet no man claimed the land and no cattle grazed upon the commons. Rains had been abundant. The lakes were full of water, the hillsides decked in flowers, while in the vegas, along the arroyas, on the prairies, plains and plateaus, the green, downy mesquite grass waved like fields of knee-high wheat. It was magnificent! Such glorious isolation; such boundless possibilities. Men with no practical knowledge of the cattle business, though practical business men in their proper spheres, became entranced with the illusive picture and were soon the pioneers in the wildest boom the cattle business has ever known. Enthusiasm spread and soon the whole country was delirious with the fever of the cattle boom. Inexperienced men paid fabulous prices for herds of cattle, "range delivery," and simply supposed themselves owners of so many hundreds or thousands of cattle. They paid great sums of money for range privileges to which they received not a shadow of title and could only hold so long as some one else did not choose to appropriate a portion thereof, and as the boom continued the ranches increased, the herds became more numerous, range rights became more precarious and grass and water scarcer, though in greater demand.

The excitement once started, the old-time cowmen proceeded to speculate with a recklessness that knew no bounds, and while a few of them "got from under," hundreds of them were the greatest sufferers by reason of the collapse. English syndicates, as well as American companies and rich individuals, made cattle and range investments representing millions of dollars, and while they lived in their luxurious homes hundreds or thousands of miles from their ranches, their cattle interests were often intrusted to men of limited business ability and little if any practical experience. That is, this was the case in most instances, for in those days it was almost impossible to employ a reliable, experienced cowman for the reason that most of them were operat-

ing for themselves, though after the boom many of the best cowmen were glad to get jobs as managers for others. These big cattlemen would visit their ranches probably once a year, or in the case of a syndicate or big company send representatives. In either case the visit would be more of a display of splendor or pageant across the plains than a business trip for purposes of inspection and regulation.

Dick Ware, for several years Sheriff of Mitchell County and afterward United States Marshall for the Western District of Texas, once told me in an amusingly interesting manner how he chaperoned the M— Cattle Company from Austin up through the Panhandle. They were all Englishmen and had come over here to select a location for a cattle ranch. In the early part of the summer of 1881 they reached Austin on a special train, but as their arrival had been heralded several weeks previous, all necessary preparations had been made for their reception. They were met at the train by brass bands, committees of prominent citizens, State officials and leading society ladies, and were driven from the train to the hotel in decorated carriages. Receptions and champagne suppers followed, and for several days all business was virtually suspended in deference to the functions in honor of the distinguished guests. Ware, who had for several years served as a ranger and was well acquainted with Western Texas, was selected to guide the party on their tour. There were lords, dukes, peers, earls, valets and flunkys, newspaper correspondents, Generals, Captains, Admirals and dudes. The expedition was regularly organized by electing Rt. Hon. Sir Somepunkins director general, and his first official act was to direct that Ware don a uniform indicative of his official rank. But Ware refused to comply with this request, giving as a reason that he was well acquainted out West and might meet some of his old friends, and he wouldn't want to make them feel envious or estranged. This matter having been amicably adjusted, Ware was given carte blanche to provide everything necessary for the trip, which he proceeded to do to the amount of about \$1,500. Then he listened to the suggestions of a friend and invested about \$1,200 more in luxuries, but he said the fact suddenly dawned upon him that merely because he was spending the money of wealthy people who did not care for expense did not justify him in reckless extravagance, so he called a halt and with a guilty conscience made his report to the director general.

"I think I have made all necessary purchases. Guess I've been mighty extravagant, but if I've bought anything we don't

need I'll have the order countermanded," said Ware, at the same time producing a list of the articles, which ranged from tooth-picks to two-horse wagons, the price of each article being given and the total summed up. His highness scanned the list and then shook his head and began walking the floor, evidently greatly vexed and thoroughly disgusted. Ware knew he had no business to spend too much money, but he didn't think his highness would be so highly indignant about it, especially after being advised that the orders could be countermanded, if necessary, and he was on the point of apologizing and tendering his resignation, when Rt. Hon. Sir Somepunkins walked up, shook the list of articles at Ware, and blurted out:

"'Blow the bloomin' cost! You haven't spent enough to pay for a decent shave. I would infer from the kind of stuff you have on this list that you expect only the flunkies to accompany you on this trip, and 'ow the 'ell do you expect us to have any comfort with a mess like this? Would you 'ave hus ride in contraptions like these and drink water from muddy streams? Not a bit of champagne nor a carriage on the list. Maybe you know all about the Western country, but I see that you don't know much about the comforts for an Hinglish gentleman.'

"Then I got mad and swelled up and told the 'Henglish gentleman' that if it wasn't for insulting the Governor, who was a friend of mine, and had insisted that I take the job of guiding the outfit through the West that I would kick an 'Henglish gentleman' down stairs, and that if they didn't like my style they could go it, and that I would have nothing more to do with the commissary and caravan department; that they could fix that to suit themselves, and when they got ready to start they could send word to me and I'd be ready; whereupon I got my hat and walked out of the room, leaving his lordship looking more astonished than mad. I paid no more attention to the matter for three or four days, and hearing nothing from the parties, supposed they had procured another guide and pulled out, but one morning I received a message advising me to be at a certain place ready to start at a certain hour. I bought a box of cheap cigars, which, together with a change of underclothes, I packed in my grip and pulled out. When I reached the starting place I quickly realized why my penuriousness and lack of preparation had so offended His highness. There were the two-horse wagons I had bought, but instead of each wagon containing four or five Earls, Dukes, Lords, etc., seated on piles of bedding and with their legs hanging over the sides, true Western fashion, they were loaded with pro-

visions, guns, ammunnition, champagne, beer, whisky, flunkies, tents, lounges, wardrobes, and the like; while there was a great string of carriages, decorated with liveried drivers, loaded with lords, the lords in turn loaded with champagne, and the whole drawn by spirited horses in waving plumes. The carriages were surrounded by state officials and new-made friends of the distinguished English gentlemen, sorrowfully bidding the guests good-bye. It was a sorrowful good-bye, too, for I don't think the Austin gang has ever had another such succulent morsel fall into their hands. I got into a carriage with Right Hon. Sir Somepunkins and two other descendants of nobility, and we were off. I thought from the expressions on their faces that smoking was offensive to them, so I threw away the bigger part of a 5c cigar and a few minutes later one of them produced a box of 50c cigars and presented me with one, whereupon we all smoked and then began a social intercourse which evolved into a warm friendship, for I came to know them as a jolly, good-natured lot of fellows, extravagant and impractical, but able to afford it. In view of my own ludicrous experience I never referred to the matter of expense, and as it was never intimated to me, I have no idea what the cost of that trip amounted to, but we were out several weeks, traveled through Western Texas, and all over the country, which is now the M— Ranch, and which was established as a result of that trip."

This is a conservative and true illustration of how the country was inspected and ranches located by some of the boom victims.

Extravagance of this character was the rule rather than the exception. One more instance presents itself. I think it was in 1884 that a big champagne supper was given in Colorado City, Texas, for which occasion the cost of the champagne alone was more than \$3,000. The attendance was large, but notwithstanding this, there was a surfeit of full stomachs and a surplus of champagne. It was free, and hundreds of bottles were carried away by the guests, and perhaps an equal number of the guests were carried away by their friends. This is not mentioned as an exception, but as an illustration, for such events were common, and if Abilene, San Angelo and nearly every Western Texas town now had the money that was spent in this way during the cattle boom Wall Street would not be the financial center of the United States.

The cattle boom era presented spectacles that will never be repeated in any country under any circumstances. It was a blaze of glory in a world of visions; a riotous feast on the crater of

ruin. It was drink and be merry, spend money and get more. The English nobleman, sent here, perhaps, as the "business manager" for some English syndicate, the native "cattle king" and the common cowpuncher were boon companions in social dissipation. They ate at the same table, drank at the same bar, gambled in the same game and all came to grief in one batch. With the Englishman the ranching business was more of a pastime than a business proposition, and losses and profits were of little concern to him, and as for the stockholders he represented they could change managers when it suited their convenience. The cowman, grown suddenly rich, could not comprehend how there could be any kind of adversity that would take from him the greater part of his wealth, and the cowpuncher figured on a lifetime job, good wages and a glorious old blowout every time he reached town. But when cattle prices depreciated from \$35 to \$10, \$8, and even down to \$5, per head, they discovered something they were not looking for, and did not have to send for an expert to read the writing on the notices from the banks and commission houses. Then the masks of rudeness were discarded and true manhood stood before the world in pathetic grandeur. When the sandstorms swept over the sun-plagued prairies, and the storm broke from the clouds of disaster, hurling hundreds of fortunes into one common pile of wreckage, many a cowman went to the rescue of his creditors and without a murmur gave up the last dollar he had in cash, cattle and intangible range rights, and only asked for an opportunity to make more money and pay every dollar he owed. Others were forced into bankruptcy and buried beneath judgments, while others paid their debts and had enough left to be independent, though poor compared with their former condition. The cowboy saw the folly of his ways and accepted a reduction in his wages as his share of the general calamity, though he viewed with alarm the encroachments of the barbed wire fence, which eventually forced him to turn to other useful pursuits—his pockets empty, his bosom full of regrets, his life full of experience and his head full of wisdom.

With the introduction of the boom the cattle business to a very great extent passed into the hands of new men, and with the crash there was another very general transfer of ownership. The first instance was an acquisition by purchase, but in the second, at least in a majority of cases, it was a sad surrender of property under forced sale.

When prices began to advance in 1881 what were then consid-

ered good average range cattle, though the commonest kind of scrubs when compared with the improved herds of to-day, were valued at about \$8 per head, but by the latter part of 1882 these same cattle could not be purchased for less than \$35 per head. It was in May, 1882; that Texas grass fed steers sold on the Chicago market for \$6.80 per hundredweight, the highest market price ever paid for this class of stuff. Market prices were, on the whole, a shade lower during 1883, but the price of range cattle remained about the same as during 1882. In 1884 the market opened a little stronger than it had been during 1883, but closed considerably lower and the range prices weakened perceptibly. In 1885 the market opened favorably, but went all to pieces in December, then came the collapse and prices went from bad to worse, reaching bed rock in 1887.

Everything from combinations to over-production has been assigned as the cause of the collapse in 1886, but indiscretion more nearly embodies the cause of the whole trouble. One element of this indiscretion has already been alluded to sufficiently and the other may deserve a more comprehensive presentation.

It was a rare thing that a cowman owned or positively controlled any considerable body of land. He depended wholly upon the stability of prices, the continued free use of the range and a succession of favorable seasons. He had not stopped to consider that prices were unreasonably high, his investments injudicious, free grass doomed by the natural, inevitable influx of immigration and a long succession of favorable seasons not a part of any country's history. He figured free grass as a part of his purchase right and he scoffed any attempt or advice to the effect that he secure his interest by purchase or other positive control. Originally the cattlemen were the bitterest opponents of the lease law, which they have since so determinedly fought to maintain, for experience has demonstrated that, in so far as their particular industry is concerned, it was a blessing forced upon them.

The boom ushered in a new era in the West, especially in the cattle business, and its collapse demonstrated that success depended not upon great herds of scattered scrubs, but upon well-bred herds, that the cattleman must own or control land and apply practical business methods to every feature of his business; but when the boom collapsed the crippled cattlemen were in no condition to acquire land, either by lease or purchase, and for nine years, beginning with 1886, it seemed that every power of heaven and earth had combined against the cowman. Drouths

and die-ups followed and prices dragged along at starvation figures, with no apparent reason therefor.

In 1895 prices advanced again, and by 1898 had reached the boom degree again, but in 1900 began to decline and have since dragged along at a bare existence state, but there have been few failures and no universal disaster. The cowman was prepared to take care of his stock, and where he was a borrower the commission men were willing to take care of him because of this fact. He owned land, the universal basis of credit, whereas in 1886 he didn't own anything and owed everybody.

One illustration will doubtless serve to show how fictitious fortunes, which men thought were real, disappeared in 1886, like bubbles on the bosom of a swollen river. In 1883 a certain man owned a herd of cattle, estimated at 45,000 head, and in that year he refused \$1,500,000 for his cattle, horses and range privileges. In 1886, after the collapse and the awful drift to the Pecos River, these same cattle, horses and range privileges sold for \$245,000 and the man's liabilities exceeded his assets by \$50,000. Had the prices of 1882 continued the natural increase and the number of beef cattle sold during the three years should have made the total value of this herd at least \$2,500,000. With all it was not so bad, but hundreds of cases could be enumerated where such had been the case with individuals and companies operating upon a big scale. This is not an extreme illustration, but a fair medium. In fact, about the only men who did not suffer a similar fate were the very wealthy, who owed but little and did not have to sell or the small owners similarly situated.

Few people can now comprehend by what means the boom of 1882 caused thousands of cattle to swarm upon the Western ranges, hitherto unused and unoccupied. They were to a great extent, a scrawny, sorry lot from the cane brakes of Louisiana and light-bodied, long-horned, fleet-footed creatures from all parts of Texas and Old Mexico; and another explanation of the magical multiplication of cattle on the Western ranges is found in the fact that there had for some time been a heavy immigration from all parts of the United States to Texas, and these people, for the most part farmers, had taken up small holdings in the central part of the State, a section previously devoted very extensively to stock raising, thus crowding out the cattlemen and forcing them to seek new locations farther west.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE AWFUL DRIFTS AND DIE-UPS.

The die-ups and drifts in Western Texas, while inseparably related, are different propositions. Many big drifts occurred unattended or were followed by no considerable die-up, and in many instances big die-ups occurred where there was no drifting of any consequence; yet I deem it proper to treat the two subjects as one.

Previous to 1883 each ranch had its own line riders, that is, men who patrolled the southern boundary of each range, especially during the winter. When a blizzard swept over the country the cattle would begin drifting before it, and it was then no uncommon sight to see great herds of cattle rolling southward, with nothing to eat and nothing to drink, covered with snow and pelted with sleet, marching to the doleful music of craning footsteps and howling winds. Day and night, while the storm lasted, the herds continued to drift. When the line rider found a great path of mud and trampled snow he knew a herd had passed and would follow it until the storm abated and then drift the cattle back to their own range. The cattle could not be made to turn back and face the blizzard, hence they must be followed until it subsided. Previous to the winter of 1883-84 there had been no die-ups of any consequence on the ranges of Western Texas.

In the winter of 1883 a new system of line riding was adopt-



ed. The cattlemen of Western Texas combined and established a series of line camps along the line of the Texas and Pacific Railroad. There were three of these camps, in each of which there were about twenty-five men. The first camp, in charge of Tom D. Love, was located near Colorado City; the next camp, under Buck Jones, was near Big Springs, and the third camp, under C. A. O'Keefe, was near Midland. These outfits patrolled the railroad from the Pecos to the east line of Nolan County, and owing to the fact that the winter was mild until the latter part of December, there were no drifts and the work was easy, but during January and February there were several severe storms and heavy drifts, and the following from the diary of one of the men in the Big Springs camp presents an excellent picture of a big drift and the method of dealing with it:

"Each man in our outfit had a mount of three horses, well fed and fat. We had a good cook and plenty of the best provisions the market could supply. We drew our pay, lived high and worked mighty little until the latter part of December, when one evening about 3 o'clock, a black cloud appeared in the north, and we knew that a norther was coming, and that a drift was certain. About 4 o'clock the blizzard came raging upon us, but it was nearly midnight before the lead of the herd passed, at which time the ground was covered with six or seven inches of sleet and snow. There is no way of estimating the number of cattle in that drift, for nearly every range for a distance of 200 miles north of our camp had contributed to the grand total.

"The cattle in the lead were from the first ranges north of the railroad, while behind them came cattle from the adjoining range, and so the rotation of herds continued. We were in readiness, and when the leaders passed we started drifting with them, for we must follow the cattle until the blizzard subsided and then turn them back. All that night and all the next day the blizzard continued, and the avalanche of cattle rolled before it, the patter of the sleet upon their backs, the crunching of snow beneath their feet and the moaning of the winds blending in a dismal, deafening noise. After dark that night the wind calmed and the herd ceased marching. For fully twenty hours we had stopped only long enough to hurriedly prepare a meal, and we must yet continue our journey until we had passed the lead of the herd, which we did the next morning about 9 o'clock. This will give you some idea of the proportions of a drift herd. When the cattle quieted we were about the center of the herd,

and though we traveled only about four miles an hour, we did not get ahead of the herd for perhaps ten hours.

"The cattle were not in a compact body, but were scattered along for this distance, and it is safe to estimate that it was eighty miles from the leaders to the drags of that drift. On the morning of the second day every cloud had disappeared, a perfect calm prevailed, the sun was shining brightly, while the ground and backs of the cattle were covered with sleet and snow, and about us was a vast expanse of open country, not a tree or mound to mar the scene. The cattle, exhausted by their long march, were lying down, many of the poor creatures too weak and famished to ever rise, and the eye could by no means survey the limits of that resting, hungry, sleet-covered herd, over which the warming sun rays seemed to cast a stupor. By noon we had the leaders stirred up and moving back north, and continued pressing them until every animal that could travel was thrown north of the Texas and Pacific Railroad, most of them into the canyons and breaks along the Colorado River."

While this line riding outfit was dealing with this drift herd the other two outfits were handling similar propositions. During January and February, 1884, there were several blizzards and big drifts, but owing to the perfect system of line riding but few cattle were left south of the Texas and Pacific Railroad. The die-up during the winter of 1883 and spring of 1884 amounted to about 25 per cent.

In the winter of 1884 the same system of line camps was established, being in charge of Tom D. Love, William Holloway and Henry Mason, but the season of 1884 had not been very good, the range was overstocked, water scarce, and there was not enough grass to support the demands of thousands of cattle being ranged upon it, so it was decided to let a majority of them drift south to Pecos River and Devils River, where they could find shelter and probably be able to rustle a living. Soon great herds were drifting across the waterless divide south of the Texas and Pacific Railroad, particularly the country west of Big Springs and east of the sand hills, where thousands of the cattle died of thirst, and thousands more, wild-eyed, gaunt and miserable, straggled along to that deceptive chasm of death, the Pecos River, with its steep banks, narrow channels and whirling current. On reaching the river banks the crazed cattle would plunge heedlessly into the water, open their mouths and drink their stomachs full while floating along, and in this way probably 25 per cent of the cattle that reached the river were drowned,

and for weeks during the spring of 1885 the Pecos River was a revolting mess of carrion and ruin—a seething mass of horns, carcasses and stench silently gliding to the Gulf—while for miles on either side of that stream the air was filled with putrid odors and the ground was literally covered with dead animals: and to add additional pathos to this dismal picture, hundreds of mother cows had waded into bog holes, died of poverty or been drowned in the river, and the country was full of bleating, starving, motherless calves.

There was no drifting of any consequence after 1885, as the most of the big pastures were built during the summer and fall of that year, and cattle were held in these pastures, or could only drift to the north line of the fence where they were not in pastures. Each year following the number of pastures increased, the range work was greatly reduced, and by 1888 the open range round-ups, big drifts, drives and hunts were forever a thing of the past in Western Texas. It has been conservatively estimated that the death loss during the winter of 1884 and the spring of 1885 amounted to about 45 per cent.

Previous to 1885 all round-up work was done by districts, each district being numbered, and comprising from four to ten counties, but owing to the drift during the winters of 1884-85, there were scarcely any cattle left on the northern tier of ranges in the spring of 1885, so the district system was abolished, all districts north of the Texas and Pacific Railroad being consolidated into one. C. A. O'Keefe was made general superintendent and all outfits were placed under his direction and sent to the Pecos and Devils River countries to gather and drive back what cattle had not drifted via the mortuary route into the great beyond. This was the most stupendous round-up proposition that had ever confronted the cattlemen of Texas. After the cattle had been gathered on the Pecos and Devils Rivers they had to be thrown back upon their own ranges, many of them a distance of 300 to 400 miles north, and to reach them a desert country, about 150 miles wide, had to be crossed, and on this desert there was not a drop of water nor a sprig of green grass, and but little vegetation of any kind, owing to the fact that a drouth prevailed that spring. I will first take up the drives from the Pecos to the headwaters of the Concho, then the drives from Beavers Lake, the head of the Devils River, to the Concho. I will take only one herd as an illustration of the Pecos River work, though the cattle from the upper Pecos country were not

thrown on the Concho, but were taken to Odessa, in Ector County, where they were watered from a system of wells.

As the result of the first day's work on the lower Pecos 8,000 cattle were gathered, and a detachment of men assigned to drive, or rather drift, them back, for there could be no system in handling such an unwieldy number, while the round-up continued working up and down the river sending back great herds each day. From the Pecos River the first objective point was the head of Bull Run, about 100 miles north of the Pecos and about sixty miles south of the Concho. Bull Run was nothing more than a sipe spring tributary of the Concho, and during the most favorable seasons afforded only a limited supply of water, but it was supposed that at this place the men would be able to get enough water for their horses and to replenish their own supply, though the cattle must suffer until they reached the Concho. As soon as the cattle were started north they began to string out, the strongest taking the lead and the weaker ones forming what was called the drag, and in this way the herd was soon strung out for a very great distance, the lead probably reaching Bull Run forty miles in advance of the drag. By pushing the cattle every hour during the day and night it would take at least sixty-five hours to reach Bull Run with the last of the herd and forty or fifty more to reach the Concho. Just grasp, if you can, the enormity of this undertaking—driving 8,000 head of cattle, a majority of them weak cows and young calves, a distance of 160 miles without water.

The weather was extremely hot and the ground parched and barren and as the herd moved along the dust arose and floated over the herd and along its trail, and soon the men, horses and cattle were paying tributes of misery to that desert of dust. When the outfit left the Pecos its supplies consisted of enough provisions to last during the trip and as much water as could be loaded onto three wagons. The horses were given small allowances of this water, and it was issued to the men with the greatest economy, but, notwithstanding all these precautions, long before Bull Run was reached most of the barrels had fallen to staves, and there was scarcely enough water left to dampen the parched lips of the men. The entire route was now lined with dead cattle or those too weak to travel further and which were left to perish. The suffering of every animal in the herd was awful. They walked no longer, but merely shambled along, their eyes became sunken and they kept up an incessant half-choked lowing. It is remarkable the distances range cattle can

smell water. Instances are not rare when they have gone to water for a distance of thirty miles in an unknown country, guided only by the sense of smell. When a thirsty heard first smells water the cattle lift their heads, sniff the air, start toward it in a brisk walk, which soon becomes a swift trot and then a dead run. On the drive from Pecos to Bull Run the cattle would frequently come to a mesquite bush or bunch of stunted elms, and smelling the green leaves, would make a dash for them, and soon there would be a milling, serambling, bawling mass of cattle around the place. If it was a bush not a vestige of it would be left, and if a tree, it would be twisted to threads by the awful jam and stripped of every particle of twigs and foliage.

On reaching Bull Run the men found a condition revolting beyond description. Not only had the lead of the herd preceded them several hours, but during the winter drift several hundred cattle had stopped and remained there, and for a distance of a mile or so, which was as far as there was even a trace of water along that stream, there were fully 2,000 dead animals, and over their carcasses probably 10,000 cattle were serambling to sip mud and filth from the seeping tracks. While a few of the men tried to arrange some kind of drinking place for the horses the rest of them selected a place and dug a hole in which to catch some seep water for their own use. Around this hole they had to form a circle and fight away the cattle to keep them from tumbling into it. The men finally succeeded in getting enough muddy, foul stuff to fill a few buckets, but the only way they could "stomach" it was to make it into tea, and when water got so rotten that a thirsty cow puncher, accustomed to drinking from prairie pools and mud holes, had to adopt such methods it was about as bad as language could describe or mind conceive.

Of the cattle in this herd possibly 4,000 of them lived to reach Concho, the others perishing along the route.

Of the cattle that drifted into the Devils River country great herds of them passed down the Concho and through the town of San Angelo, where many of them would seek shelter behind business houses, residences or any kind of structure that would serve as a wind-break, and every day during or just after a drift, hundreds of dead animals would have to be dragged out of the business and residence portions of the town.

The work of gathering and driving back the cattle that drifted into the Devils River country was the same as that of the Pecos country, the work in the Devils River country being in

charge of Kenny Mayes, manager for the V P outfit, located in West Tom Green County. About the 1st of April more than three hundred men, representing ranches throughout the surrounding country and for several hundred miles north, met as per arrangement at the V P ranch and from there went to Beaver Lake, about 150 miles south. Beaver Lake is a body of water about fifty yards wide and four miles long. It is the headwaters of the Devils River, and is in the midst of as rough country as could be found in Texas. This outfit rounded-up everything for several miles south of Beaver Lake, and all cattle being along the water courses it was no trouble to find them, even in that rough country, and to drive them back to Beaver Lake it was only necessary to get behind them and start them up the canyon. After getting all the cattle into the vicinity of Beaver Lake an outfit of fifteen or twenty men would round up three or four thousand head and start them up the Devils River Canyon. These starts would be made about 2 o'clock in the afternoon and at least one herd would leave every day until all cattle belonging north of Beaver Lake had been driven out of the Devils River country. It was seventy-five miles from Beaver Lake to Hammonds Well, where the first water was obtained for the men and horses, and seventy-five miles from there to the Concho, where the cattle got their first water after leaving Beaver Lake. The cattle were kept moving day and night, and it required about eighty hours to make the drive from Beaver Lake to the Concho. Fully 30 per cent of the cattle would perish along the way, and as there would be a herd traveling the same route every day for twenty or thirty days, each of them suffering the same fate, some idea may be formed as to the carcass-strewn desolation along that trail.

The winter of 1886-87 was very severe, and then occurred, without doubt, the most disastrous die-up ever known in the United States, and from the Canadian border to the Rio Grande the range country was literally covered with carcasses. Many big pastures had then been completed in Texas, most of them on the Staked Plains. When the blizzards came cattle confined and then, pressing close to the fence, would move back and forth, suffering from hunger, thirst and cold and trampling out every particle of grass. One would fall down and die and other weak ones would tumble over it, and fall down and die and other weak ones would tumble over it, and soon there would be a heap of dead along the line of fence, and in many instances for a distance of several yards the heap

of dead would be higher than the fence. The sleet and snow would sift between these bodies and drift over them, and soon form a solid, frozen mass, over which many other cattle would walk, tumble over the fence and drift away, and in many cases this same thing occurred in 1904. The death loss during the winter of 1886-87 was about 50 per cent.

During 1887, 1888 and 1889 season were bad, grass scarce and prices very low, and the death loss considerable, but in the spring of 1890 cattlemen were feeling considerably encouraged. The losses during the previous winter had been nominal, cattle were fattening and shedding unusually early, and indications were that there would be an advance in prices; but on the 20th of March a blizzard swept over the country and continued for thirty-six hours, and as a result of this calamity canyons, ravines, creeks and hollows were filled with dead cattle and many cowmen were ruined.

Cattle did very well during 1891 and 1892, but not so during 1893. That year was unusually dry and the winter very severe, and during January, February and March, 1894, cattle died faster than skinning outfits could take off their hides. In the canyons, along the creeks and around all watering places the ground was covered with carcasses and the air was laden with stench, while on the prairies as far as the eye-sight could survey on clear days the earth was dotted with shining objects—it was the sunshine glistening on skinned carcasses. So far as Western Texas was concerned this was the worst season ever known, though the disaster was not general, as in 1886-87. The average death loss during 1894 has been estimated at 50 per cent, and there were numerous instances where the losses amounted to 75 or 80 per cent. A certain cattle company put 5,000 cattle in a pasture on the plains, and the following spring had less than 500 head left. One of the best known cattlemen in the State started into the winter with 7,000 head of cattle and lost more than 6,000 of them, and another prominent cattleman turned 700 2-year-old steers in pasture in Tom Green County, and the next spring gathered less than 100 head. These were extreme cases, but hundreds of others could be enumerated where the loss was fully as great.

Since 1894 there has not been a die-up of any consequence in Western Texas, for the simple reason that cattle have been properly attended to. On nearly every ranch in Western Texas today there are big farms devoted to the cultivation of milo-maize, Kaffir corn, sorghum and other feed crops adapted to the

soil and climate, and if these crops fail the cattlemen do not hesitate to buy feed for their stock, for cattle have been graded to a high degree, and the loss of an animal means the loss of considerable money, and instead of trusting to luck the cowman now depends upon judicious management.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE OLD-TIME ROUND-UP.

The most spectacular feature of the early day cattle business was the round-up, concerning which so much has been said, for no phase of the cattle business has been so frequently written about, so little understood and therefore so ignorantly presented. It embraced nearly the entire system of handling cattle on the range under the old regime, and afforded visionary and sensational writers an unlimited field for the distribution of volubility.

The methods and systems of conducting round-ups varied some in the different localities and underwent changes as conditions required. In the early days when ranches were few and many miles apart, each man had his own range to his own exclusive use, on which he could keep his cattle with no great amount of trouble both during the winter and summer seasons and in these days each rancher conducted his own round-ups. If the grass got too scarce or settlers began to trouble him he would hunt a new range, gather his cattle and move. But as ranches became more numerous and settlers increased it also came to pass that the man who went in search of a new range found that some one had beaten him to it. Then range joined ranged and cattle mixed up promiscuously. The cattlemen adopted the co-operative plan, worked each other's ranges and included the entire country in the scope of the round-up operations. The co-operative round-up plan was an innovation of the early '70s, but so far as Western Texas is concerned it



reached its zenith and ruled supreme from 1882 to 1888:

The cattlemen's convention held in Graham, Young County, in 1877, adopted what was known as the district system. The number of boundaries of these districts are not known at present, but none of them extended farther west than Taylor County, and the boundaries of these districts were changed each year until the great drift to the Pecos River in the winter of 1884-85, when all the country north of the Pecos River was consolidated into one district. In 1882 there were seven of these districts, each comprising a scope of country about 100 miles square, as follows: The Devil's River district, the Concho district, the Hackberry district, the Colorado district, the Sweetwater district, the Double Mountain district and the Clear Fork district.

Early each spring the cattlement would meet in convention, elect a general superintendent of round-ups for each district and specify a day when work should begin. The superintendent of round-ups had absolute charge of the work in his district for the year and received a salary of \$5 per day for his services, and both spring and fall round-ups began and ended as nearly as possible at the same time. The work in each district was now so identical that for illustration purposes it will only be necessary to take up one of them.

The spring round-ups began as early in the spring as the grass was green and the cattle and horses strong enough to stand the work, which was generally about the 20th of May, and the work lasted about thirty-five or forty days. The fall work began about the first of September and continued about thirty days. The spring round-up was for the purpose of gathering all cattle that had drifted away from their proper ranges during the winter, branding the calves and driving the cattle back to their ranges. The fall round-up was for the purpose of gathering beef cattle, cattle that had been overlooked during the spring round-ups or drifted away during the summer, and branding late calves. The spring round-ups were by far the greatest in proportions, but the system was the same.

In the Colorado district work always began on the head of Tobacco, in the Long S range, the date of meeting having been previously designated and advertised. To this meeting place each big cattle outfit in the district would send a chuck wagon and a considerable number of men. Each outfit in the adjoining districts would send from one to half a dozen men, and the small cattlemen in the district, whose holdings were not sufficiently large to justify the great expense of running a chuck

wagon, would send one or two men. On the appointed day from every direction would come big chuck wagons drawn by four or six mules, crowds of cowboys driving herds of cow ponies, and from one to half a dozen horsemen with their packs and little bunches of saddle horses, these being the small ranchmen of the district or the men from other districts coming to join the work. By the close of the first day there would be fifteen or twenty wagons and three or four hundred cowboys in camp, but there was generally a wait of three or four days, giving ample time for everybody interested in the work to arrive. During this time of inactivity every character and phase of cowboy life would assert itself. It was anything from a singing convention to a theological argument, from a wrestling match to a broncho busting contest. It was an unrestrained reign of conviviality: the frolic preceding the ordeal. Strong lunged veterans caroled the memory of "Sam Bass," bellowed a "Tribute to the Trail," or warbled the "Cowpuncher's Dying Declaration," or "The Charge I Left Behind Me." Every one had a supreme right to sing twice at once if he wanted to do so, a feat that was accomplished by singing one song and another tune. The fact that a dozen or two cooks were blustering and cursing around, half a dozen rows going on over poker games, two or three shooting scrapes imminent, didn't interrupt the great Western chorus. I have heard hundreds of coyotes howling at one time, dozens of steam whistles screeching and bells ringing on New Year's night; I have heard the thunders roll, the lightning crash and the stampeded herd roaring over rocky ledges; I have heard thousands of cattle bawling and bellowing and hundreds of lost, scared calves bleating at round-ups, but I have never heard any volume of sound or musical uproar equal to these commencement exercises. But every cowpuncher wasn't a musician, and many of them didn't even give ear to something they will never have a chance to hear again, so every man indulged in that character of pastime most consistent with his inclinations. The good story teller was a prime favorite, but if a story teller narrated something that didn't come up to the standard or that had been previously heard by most of the crowd, he would meet a fate that would have netted its inventor a fortune in the days of the Inquisition. Such a story would be followed by a death-like silence. This would give the narrator time to realize his awful predicament, feel a proper sense of humiliation, and wonder why one so innocent should get into trouble so unexpectedly and meet a fate so fearful. Then the

High Muck-a-Muck of the Kangaroo Court would look solemn and address the crowd about like this:

"Fellow Citizens: This is an offense with which human means of punishment are not commensurate. No evidence or trial by jury is necessary. That would be a waste of precious time and a burlesque upon justice. We can't afford to waste a thousand dollars' worth of time over a 5-cent villain, nor burlesque justice in dealing with a crime like this. The choir will therefore sing some choice selection while the Court makes up his mind what punishment to administer."

Protests, supplications, threats, silence, pleas of guilty or ignorance were of like futility. The will of the High Muck-a-Muck was the law of the camp and his decree was inexorable, and while the offender sat silent and pale, the picture of despair, or pleaded or "faunched" to his own detriment the choir would sing a few stanzas of the official hymn, the first twelve stanzas of which were as follows:

"That same old gag we've often heard—  
Ten million times or more,  
Now don't you feel like rotten fruit,  
Plumb rotten to the core?"

The Court having sufficiently and solemnly meditated arrives at a conclusion and signals for the music to stop, after which he arises and in a voice denoting much indignation announces:

"Gentlemen and Fellow Citizens: The Court having taken this heinous offense under careful advisement, has fixed a light punishment, one commensurate with the mental condition of the offender. The verdict of the Court is that the offender be cleansed of his sins by being thrown into the creek with a 200-pound rock tied around his neck, and I now appoint myself and the rest of the camp to see that the sentence of the Court is immediately carried out."

Then the friends of the defendant would appeal to the mercy of the Court. They would make a strong case in his behalf, showing beyond controversy that he was a victim of mental tuberculosis, and that the sentence of the Court, if literally executed, would probably prove fatal. That the offender was being supported by a wife and several children, and that it would not be right and proper to impose upon them the additional burden of defraying his funeral expenses. Of course there would be those in the crowd who would defend the actions of the Court

and insist that the sentence be executed. They would ask all manner of impertinent questions in regard to the offender's previous history, which the offender's friends would candidly admit was something awful; but it was the universal rule of the Court to modify the sentence so as to omit the rock part of it pending a repetition of the act. Then if the offender didn't attempt to resist the infliction of the punishment of being thrown into the creek his troubles were soon over and his crime properly expiated, but if he resisted he was liable to hear several more stanzas of the official hymn and feel the sensation of flying through the air and landing in the water after every stanza.

The Kangaroo Court had jurisdiction over all minor offenses, such as fist fights, assaults with intent to bulldoze, manslaughter committed before or during the war, wife desertion, etc., and criminal jurisdiction over such crimes as cheating at mumble-the-peg, poker, fuzzy-wuzzy, chuck-a-luck, seven-up and the telling of inferior and twice-told yarns, and there was not an hour during these waits after the camp had been reached and before the work started that the court was not in session and handing down decisions.

But while the cowboys are indulging in their rude festivities and other games of chance the superintendents and bosses of the various outfits assembled have held a conference, perfected plans and become familiar with the duty assigned to each outfit, and long before day of the third or fourth morning a "turnout" order is given. That terminates the merry-making and inaugurates an energy of a more important character. A few minutes after the "turnout" order has been given the camp is apparently in wild turmoil and confusion, but it is really a perfect system in vigorous operation, for there is a boss with every squad of men, and every man has received instructions. The first thing is rolling and tying up beds, and the next thing is a rush for the chuck wagons, where each man grabs a tin cup, a tin plate and a knife and fork and then helps himself to some steak, a chunk of bread and some strong coffee. A few minutes later three or four hundred men are busy roping and saddling their "mounts," and probably fifty or more of these "mounts" are endeavoring to dismount the mounter. In the vicinity of each chuck wagon there is a great deal of bustle and local disturbance. The cooks are busy putting away dishes, rolls of bedding are being thrown on the wagons, the chuck wagon mule, as usual, objects to being harnessed or handled, and is engaging two or three able-bodied men in a physical contest, while the

merry jingle of cuss words, breast yokes, trace chains, blacksnake whips and solid thumps pervade the atmosphere. But what has become of that crowd of men who were roping and saddling bronchos just as the chuck wagon disturbance attracted attention? They have gone, not one of them to be seen unless it is at long range. They have gone galloping across the country in different directions to commence the drive. A man has been detailed to pilot the chuck wagons to the next camping place, which is near where the first round-up will be held. When all is in readiness the pilot rides away, the wagons fall into line and follow him down the valley or across the country so rough that it seems impossible for a wagon to traverse it, a herd of a thousand or more saddle horses moves along behind the wagons, the tinkling of bells and rattling of hoofs commingling in a farewell refrain to the old camping ground, where skulking coyotes already growl and snarl over the food scraps.

The districts were worked by ranges, each range being numbered and each outfit known by the number of the range it represented. The ranges were worked in numerical rotation and it took from three to eight days to dispose of each one. While work was being done in a particular range the boss of the outfit controlling that range had nominal charge of the work, being second in authority, of course, to the superintendent. This boss would direct in what part of the range work should begin, where the round-up would be held, and would send men thoroughly familiar with the country to lead in the drives, and when the herd had been gathered he was always the first man to cut out his cattle, though the superintendent would put as many men to cutting as possible without interfering with each other.

By noon the round-up of the country to be covered that day has been completed and probably seven or eight thousand cattle have been thrown into one herd—a milling, bawling mass, with cows separated from their calves and each wildly hunting and bawling or bleating for the other.

As the cattle were cut out of the main round-up herd they were thrown into different bunches and held until the work of cutting had been completed and then they were driven a mile or more apart and the work of branding calves was begun. All mavericks, that is unmarked and unbranded yearlings with unknown mothers, belonged to the outfit on whose range they were found, and were always cut out and branded by this outfit. So rapidly was the branding work done that it took an outfit but a few minutes to brand several hundred calves. With the exception of the cattle belonging in the range where the outfit

was now at work all the herds would be driven with the works, until their respective ranges had been reached or until the round-up work had been completed, and during both day and night these herds were held a safe distance apart so that in case of stampede there would be as little mixing as possible. A considerable number of the men would now be detailed to hold the different herds, while the others rounded up the ranges, and the chuck wagons were no longer camped together, but were scattered about with the different herds.

After the first day there would be night drives. Small squads of men, one or more from each outfit, would be sent a distance of fifteen or twenty miles from the wagons to camp during the night and early the next morning begin driving the cattle in the direction of the place designated for the round-up. After working hard all day these men would often ride until midnight, then sleep on the bare ground, frequently rain-drenched and storm-battered, and before sunrise they would eat their pocket lunch and be in their saddles ready for another day of hard labor; and the men in camp fared no better, except that they could go to the wagons and eat their meals warm, for they had to work hard during the day and each stand guard several hours during the night. Talk about the halcyon days of the care-free, light-hearted, reckless cowpuncher! The very life they lived was enough to make them desperate. No class of men ever worked harder, endured more exposure, encountered greater dangers, had fewer of life's common comforts or less time to devote to the cheerful side of existence.

The last day's work in a district was the one which most severely tested the generalship of the superintendent and the capacity of the men under him. Within a short distance of the round-up herd there would be a dozen or more herds, each containing from 2000 to 3000 cattle which had been gathered throughout the district, many of them having been herded and driven since the first day's work. A considerable number of men with the outfit at the commencement have finished work in their range and dropped out of the deal, and with this reduced number of men and increased number of cattle the superintendent must handle the situation, and this he generally did with satisfaction to all. There were exceptions, of course, and many bloody encounters have taken place on round-up grounds. Contingencies have arisen with which no man could deal properly, and ill feelings and misunderstandings have terminated fatally, but these were affairs which no disinterested party

could prevent. No man ever held a more responsible and unenviable position than that of district superintendent of round-ups. He frequently had under him hostile forces—outfits that had been on the warpath for months or years. Then there was the chronic grumbler, always kicking about having to do more than his share of work, but never too tired nor too busy to devote a phenomenal amount of energy to furthering any kind of friction that presented itself. Trivial personal affairs might develop into serious complications, and the superintendent must not only direct the round-up operations, a gigantic proposition within itself, but he must exercise a judicial authority. At least three old round-up superintendents have been elected sheriffs in different counties in Western Texas and every one of them has made a reputation as an excellent peace officer. Not so much because they were devoid of physical fear, but because they knew how to handle men, adjust differences and prevent trouble.

After the last round-up had been out the herds would begin moving in different directions headed for their respective ranges, and when it is remembered that this system was moving along in every district it can be understood how nearly every animal that drifted away during the winter and spring was returned to its own range during the summer and fall.

The old-time round-up never was a popular institution, but it was the only means of dealing with a condition. It went from bad to worse and finally degenerated into politics, and if circumstances hadn't brought it to a termination the Legislature would have doubtless reformed it to such an extent that there wouldn't have been any of it left.

In rounding up a section of country every cow brute found would be thrown into the general herd, and this eventually became a serious phase of the proposition, especially so as the country settled up. Farmers' cows, and, in fact, cattle belonging to people living in towns near where round-ups were held, would be thrown into the herd, "choused" around for several days and probably driven many miles from their range and scattered over the country. No one with the round-up knew or cared where such cattle belonged. The round-up herders would let nothing drop out unless instructed to do so, the herd cutters would cut nothing except by direction or authority. Many a little milk pen calf has gone hungry for days and many a child has had no milk for several suppers because "Old Bet" was tangled up in a round-up. Again many of the first settlers in the country had no cows, or at least none giving milk, so

they would milk strays, that is cows belonging to some cowman. When the round-up came along these cows would be gathered, and the men not knowing whether the cow's calf was dead or had been lost on the round-up grounds, would cut her out and drive her away to her own range, and though this might be many miles from where her calf was in the pen as soon as she was turned loose she would generally go to it. The farmer or man in town missing his cattle and knowing that a round-up had been in the community, would follow it up to see about his stock, and this presented one of the most amusing though frequently pitiable features in connection with the round-up. The superintendent always gave these people permission to cut the herd, but of course he had no authority to detail any one to assist them. Every man there was working for himself or his employer, and while the superintendent could supervise the manner in which this work was done he had no semblance of authority to go beyond this in the matter of having them serve an individual. The farmer and town man, realizing their helpless condition, would sit around awhile, and then pull out for home full of wrath and disgust, cursing the round-up system in general and the superintendent in particular.

One of the most destructive and regrettable features of the round-up was the destruction of little calves and even grown cattle when weak. Many calves would become hopelessly separated from their mothers during the turmoil of the herd and would be left scattered over the country to starve or be killed by wolves, while others would be trampled to death on the round-up ground.

The round-up and its consequent evils and attendant tribulations are things of the past, and for this much let us be especially thankful to the past.



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE COWMEN, SHEEPMEN, FARMERS AND TROUBLE.

The trouble between the sheepmen and cattlemen dates from the time they first got in each other's way, a date which history chronicleth not, and there was friction between them so long as there was free grass or open range to fight over. The aggressions of a common enemy and the appearance of a common disaster did not make the cattlemen and sheepmen temporary allies, for theirs was a struggle of individual and conflicting interests which permitted of no compromise or co-operation. The slowly materializing, and, though often thwarted, eventually irresistible power, agriculture, had begun a crusade which fixed the doom of both free range combatants in so far as the confines of Texas was concerned. This, at first, apparently ridiculous interloper in the contest, met with the opposition of both the cattle and sheep interests, but it was not a combined, concerted opposition. It was the opposition of two forces, hostile to each other, and more intent upon inflicting retributive punishment than desirous of repulsing a more merciless foe. Neither the cattle or sheep interest could make common cause with agriculture, and yet they could not lay aside their own prejudices nor harmonize their conflicting interests, so they mutually hated the "nester" and especially hated each other. But of the three factions the sheepman was by far the most successful in becoming unanimously unpopular. He would herd his sheep all around the "nester's" claim, consume the water and damage the range,

and that tickled the cowman and made the "nester" mad, and then the sheepman would serenely drift his herd over into the middle of the cowman's range and the "nester's" countenance would beam like a full moon on a clear night; but ere another lunar evolution one of the "nester's" unbranded yearlings would come no more to its own happy home, and a little later the cowman would hear the melodious voice of a lusty lunged "nester" and three or four ferocious dogs, which interpreted according to the signs of the times, indicated that the "nester," who held an award to all the water in the cowman's range, was not going to allow the cowman's cattle to drink in that vicinity. But one "nester" seldom had it in for more than one cowman, and the same cowman seldom had it in for more than three or four "nesters," but a single sheepman could easily give every "nester" and every cowman within a radius of a hundred miles a personal experience grievance against him.

It was claimed that a thousand sheep would do more damage to the range than ten thousand cattle would, not because the sheep ate the grass, but because being closely herded they trampled it out, and also because neither cattle nor horses would graze on ground where sheep had been ranged. The sheepman confined himself to no particular section of country, but drifted his herd from place to place, going wherever grass and water was best and most plentiful, whereas the cowman had to confine his range to one particular section and contend with the seasons as they came. When the grass was good and water plentiful in his range the sheepman was certain to make his unwelcome appearance, but when it was dry and water scarce the sheepman was meandering round in some other part of the State, not wanted, and unwelcome no matter where he went; and as cattle ranches became more numerous and the range more occupied, the sheep herds multiplied, there was less room in which to drift, consequently the sheepman was ever present in somebody's range and the conflict became more bitter in character and serious in consequences. From 1882 to 1895 fatal encounters were frequent between cowboys and sheepherders and many a dark crime is concealed in the unwritten history of that era. Neither side is exempt from censure and neither side wholly to blame.

The sheep business, like the cattle business, had its unprecedented boom, its deplorable collapse, its long period of depression and big die-ups. The sheep boom began in 1879, and collapsed in 1883, and the depression continued until 1896, when the prices of sheep and wool advanced, and during this time

many a big sheep herd was literally wiped out of existence by a single severe winter. By 1893 most of the sheepmen had retired from the ranges of Western Texas, and by 1895, when all the range lands had been bought or leased and fenced, he was completely routed. There are a few sheep ranches west of the Pecos River, and a considerable sheep interest in the Tom Green country and along the Rio Grande, but north of the T. & P. Railroad, from Fort Worth to the Pecos River and the line of New Mexico, there is not a single band of sheep of any consequence. In fact, in 1900 there were less than five thousand sheep in that entire scope of country, whereas fifteen or twenty years ago there were hundreds of thousands of them. A majority of the sheepmen forced from the ranges of Western Texas, drifted into New Mexico and Arizona, where, during recent years, they have prospered and more than recovered their former losses, though they still live in an element of friction and uncertainty. So far as Texas is concerned, the animosities of some years ago have completely passed away, and it is amusing and highly interesting to hear an old-time sheepman and cowman recount their early day experiences. A Confederate and a Union soldier can enumerate experiences nearly as exciting and interesting.

The farmers, derisively termed "nesters" by the sheepmen and cattlemen, made their appearance on the ranges of Western Texas contemporaneous with the barbed wire fence, but the barbed wire fence, once introduced, became a permanent, multiplying institution, whereas the farmers came, got disgusted and returned to the sections from whence they came; but later, realizing that their mistake had been in getting disgusted and pulling out, came back. The history of the barbed wire fence in Western Texas may be briefly disposed of in this article, but the agricultural phase of western industrial evolution is of a character and importance deserving a more extended consideration in a subsequent chapter.

About 1878 Col. Chas. Goodnight enclosed a considerable body of land in the Paladuro Canyon country, but a goodly portion of this enclosure was formed by the impassable bluffs and cliffs along the canyon, and I do not know to what extent wire was used. As early as 1879 R. K. Wylie, of Ballinger, had fenced in a scope of country about ten or twelve miles square, and this was perhaps the first wire fence of any consequence built in the western part of the State. Snyder Bros. enclosed a ten section pasture on the Renderbrock ranch, near Colorado

City, in 1883; but none of these pastures compared with the Magnolia pasture, on the plains, which was completed by Maj. W. V. Johnson in 1883. During the time intervening between 1878 and 1883 quite a number of one and two section pastures were completed in all parts of Western Texas. These were either horse pastures, in which the big ranches kept their saddle horses and work animals, or they were enclosures around watering places, some individual having secured control of a water right and this means being adopted to keep other cattle than his own from watering in his range. The matter of fencing up water eventually became a very serious matter in the west. Frequently some small stockman or farmer would locate on the prairie considerable distance from any permanent water supply, and here he would provide stock water by making a big tank, which he would fence. During dry seasons cattle drifting through the country would come to these enclosed watering places, and being thirsty would stand around them until they died or were driven away, and where water was fenced up along the streams the result was worse, for there was then no other water to which the cattle could be driven. If not driven away these drifting herds would accumulate around a watering place until the numbers amounted to thousands, and no matter how humane the man who owned the fence and controlled the water he could not minister to the sufferings of the poor strays. In the first place he had to be economical with his water to have enough for his own stock, and if he watered the strays they would locate in his range and destroy his grass. This and the further fact that horses were frequently killed, ruined or badly damaged by running into wire fences, was the prime factor in the "barbed wire fence war," which had its origin in the central part of the State about 1880, but spread as the fences were extended westward and soon became one of the most difficult propositions with which the authorities of the State have ever had to deal. The whole country then looked upon the wire fence as an institution of infamy, and using it as an inconvenience to others was regarded as an outrage, and the fact that the party building the fence owned the land enclosed did not operate a particle in his favor. At first self-preservation to some extent atoned for the offense, but it soon degenerated into malicious destruction. No man could then build a wire fence under any circumstances with any degree of assurance that it would not be cut all to pieces, and especially were individuals

and big companies enclosing large bodies of land made to suffer, for against them there was an especially bitter sentiment. The wire fence cutters felt secure in their nefarious work, for public sentiment was with them, grand juries would not indict and where complaint was filed by information petit juries would not convict. In 1883 the Legislature passed a law making it a penal offense to cut a wire fence, big rewards were immediately offered for such offenders, public sentiment reversed itself with the usual radical vengeance in such cases and wire fence cutting stopped.

With the passing of the absolute lease law in 1893 nearly every acre of grazing land east of the Pecos River was immediately leased and that which was not already enclosed was immediately fenced, the pastures averaging from one to three or four hundred sections, but before the passage of the lease law thousands of acres were fenced without the semblance of authority, and this resulted in what were known as the back rental suits filed by the Attorney-General in 1899. As a result of these suits several thousand dollars were contributed to the general school fund, one individual having to pay more than eighty thousand dollars back lease money, and feeling satisfied because he got off so lightly.

The horse always demonstrated an utter lack of common sense in regard to wire fences. When the first wire fences were built horses probably walked or run more blindly and frequently into them than they do at present, and this is doubtless due to the fact that the older heads have learned something by experience. When a horse gets cut on a wire fence once he becomes an extremist on the subject, and when forced within a few feet of one he will snort and cavort around as though to the best of his knowledge and belief the thing was going to jump up and wrap itself around him. Every now and then some frisky colt, despite the neighing, coaxing and warnings of its mother, will dash into a barbed wire fence. In fact, it is a danger from which no horse is immune. But the mule is far more sagacious, and it is a rare thing that one of them ever gets hurt or in any way tangled up with a wire of any kind. I have never known of a cow being seriously cut by a wire fence, which is due to her thick tough hide, and when a cow firmly determines to go through one nothing but strong posts and well stretched wire will prevent her doing so, and this doesn't always prove an efficient obstruction, though the barbs inflict a sufficient punishment to deter a cow from fooling with them under ordi-

nary circumstances. During thunder storms wire fences frequently become fatally charged with electricity, and it is no uncommon thing for cattle to crowd close to the fence at such times, and in this way many of them have been killed, a fate that I have never heard of befalling the horse or mule.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### SPECIMENS OF CHEERFUL LYING AND STATEMENT OF FACTS.

There has always been two active but antagonistic elements in Western Texas, the live stock interest, contending that the country was adapted to stock raising only, and the quasi-agricultural element, contending that the country was especially adapted to farming. Both have been right to a considerable degree and both have been wrong to a certain extent, and both have gone to extremes in their representations. Things have been said against the country which were without foundation or justification, and things have been said for the country which were beyond the limits of reason. The conversion of the ranges into farms was a transformation necessarily adverse to the interests of the cattlemen, and the cattlemen did just what any other class of people would have done under the same circumstances—bestirred themselves to put a stop to it, and about that time lawyers, land agents, legislation and litigation were reputed to be the principal products of the country. To show the character of advertising Western Texas was getting during 1884, I reproduce two clippings taken from a certain daily paper then published in Texas, both interviews appearing in the same issue:

This is interview No. 1:

"Gloomy Prospects—Mr. B—, a prominent stockman of C—, is registered at the —. Speaking of conditions in his section of country, Mr. B— said: "Everything is in mighty bad shape

in my section just at present. We have had an unusually dry spring and summer, and unless we get rain in a few weeks and have a very late fall, enabling grass to grow and mature, I do not see how we are going to pull through the winter. Quite a number of farmers have moved into that country during the last two years and things are mighty squally for them. What little money they had has been spent for improvements and to live on, and now they are without money and can't get credit nor sell what they have at any price. Many of them are pulling out, going back East, where they can at least get work of some kind and keep from starving. If we can have a good rain and a late fall, cattle will do all right, but so far as crops are concerned they are hopelessly done for."

This is interview No. 2:

"Prosperous Conditions—Mr. A—, a prominent real estate agent of C—, was in the city yesterday. Speaking to a representative of the —, Mr. A— said: 'No country ever had finer prospects than we have at present. We have had good rains during the spring and summer, the range is excellent and stock are fat. There has been a wonderful amount of immigration to our section during the last two years and we are expecting the greatest boom this fall the country has ever known. Farmers have made immense crops, land is going up rapidly and it is no longer a supposition, but a fact, that we have the finest farming country in the United States. We are almost certain to get at least two more railroads within the next few months and quite a number of substantial improvements are now materializing.'"

Of course the reader will infer that at least one of these prominent gentlemen prevaricated or that both of them were slightly mistaken. Let us see about that. Now, it so happened that A and B reached C—on the same night, both having left the city before the paper containing their interviews had been printed. The paper in which the interviews were published was printed Friday morning, but did not reach C— until late Friday night. I went to the postoffice early Saturday morning, got my mail and the first paper I read was the one containing the interviews and they were among the first items I discovered. Presently A— strolled into the postoffice and attracted my attention by slapping me on the shoulder.

"Hello, there," I said. "I see you have been in —."

"Yep; just got back night before last."

"I was just reading what you had to say about the country."

"Wonder if that blamed fool newspaper man did put some-thin' in there that I said," said Mr. A—, with an assumed air of indifference, but in the midst of his exultation mounting my corns to get a better view of the paper which I was reading.

"Oh, yes; there it is," and I pointed out his interview.

He glanced over it hurriedly, looked around to see if any one was watching or listening, and being suspicious of as much, winked, nudged me and indicated with a nod of the head that he would like to see me outside where we could have a confidential chat. After we had turned the corner of the postoffice and sat down on a stair step A— chuckled a few times and then said:

"See here, don't you never give me away on this business and I'll tell you somethin' that'll make you laugh the rest of your natural life, but you musn't never breath it to a livin' soul."

Having assured him that his confidence was safe in my possession he continued:

"But ain't that piece alright, though? Well, I should say so. Any time you get ahead of your Uncle Fuller on advertising schemes or any other kind of legitimate business you have to get up before the chickens crow and not go to bed at all. But say, the way I worked that newspaper reporter though! You'd have died a laughin'. I'm glad you wasn't present, for you'd have laughed and give the whole scheme away. I accidentally run across him at the hotel, and we proceeded to get chummy. I set 'em up two or three times—don't reckon I blowed in more than \$2 on him all told—then I blowed that abbreviated exaggeration into him and the mutton head thought it was the whole truth. Of course, I overdrawed the picture a little, but that's legitimate in advertising, you know. Have to do it; and say, I think that's the best \$2 investment any man ever made. I figure that that advertisement is worth a clean, cold \$1000 to me and \$10,000 to the rest of the country."

I agreed with him fully, and then asked him if he had seen what B— had said. He looked a little surprised and said he had not, so I turned to another page and showed him B—'s interview. He read it carefully, grunting every time he came to a period or a comma. Then he scratched his head, disgorged a chew of tobacco and read it again. By this time he had decided what to say and how to say it, and forgetting that we were engaged in a strictly private conversation he expressed himself in rather thunderous tones:

"That blamed liar ought to be run out of town. I didn't exactly tell the truth, but my conscience is clear, for I was talk-



in' for the good of the country. What does a man want to be talkin' like that for, when he knows there ain't a word of truth in it? Even if it was the truth any decent man wouldn't talk that way about the country where he lives. Well, don't say nothin' about what I told you."

This concluded the confidential conversation and we separated. A—, ramming both hands deep down into his pockets, walked into the postoffice, his steps and the poise of his head indicating that he was in a very unsettled mental condition, probably trying to determine whether he should commit suicide or kill B—, while I walked down the street and had gone only a block or so when I met B—, headed for the postoffice, this being the first time I had met him after his return.

"Hello, there," says Mr. B—.

I returned his salutation and then told him that I had just read his interview. Of course he wanted to see it and I showed it to him.

"Well," he remarked after reading the article, "I reckon a lot of these land boomers and wood haulers and rabbit twisters will want to mob me in broad open daylight, won't they?"

"Maybe they would compromise on a life term in the penitentiary," I replied. Then he laughed and proceeded to confidentially divulge to me the process by which he had loaded "a blamed fool newspaper man."

"I was standin' on the street talkin' to a feller when the reporter walked up and the feller I was talkin' to introduced us. We all went in and took a few and that newspaper feller got to quizzin' me about the country, wantin' to do somethin' to pay for the whisky he'd drank, I reckon, and seein' as he hadn't set 'em up—don't reckon he had the price—I 'lowed I'd utilize an opportunity to pick a load into him and at the same time do a good turn for the country. Thought I saw a chance to skeer a few grangers and keep them from pilin' into the country, 'specially into my particular part of it, so I added my imagination to a few facts and there you are. Don't give me away, for if anybody jumps me about that business I'll tell 'em that reporter lied."

Then I showed him A—'s interview. He read it and then took the dry grin, which slowly faded into a cast of righteous indignation. He finally discovered his voice and exploded:

"Why does a gas-inflated blatherskite want to put such rot as that in a newspaper that circulates all over the country? That old quack knowed he's lyin' when he told that feller all that.

Looks to me like a man with as much decency as a dead horse and as much self-respect as a razor back hog would feel ashamed of himself. I'd hate to walk around town and look people in the back if I'd gone off somewhere and lied like that for publication. But I'll tell you right now, if people keep on comin' to this country and tryin' to farm they'll find out which one of us lied, and it won't be me."

Now, after the lapse of twenty years, uninfluenced by prejudice or self-interest, I will endeavor to give the facts in the case: \* There had been considerable immigration into the country referred to. Some of these newcomers had left the country, while others had no intention of doing so. Seasons had been fairly good, the range was all right, crops had been ordinary, no one was starving to death, there had been no rumor of any railroads and the only substantial improvement in course of materialization was a side room to Juan Garcia's chili emporium. But in those days and on down to the glorious present such eminent exaggerators were abroad in the land. These were both good men, but their Sunday school training had been sadly neglected or wholly forgotten.

But the reporter had got his notes mixed and both of these eminent prevaricators finally escaped on a technicality. A—, instead of B—, was the party registered at the hotel mentioned. But the evil habits thus formed were pursued to the usual bitter conclusion. The land agent finally became hopelessly involved in the newspaper business and the cowman afterward served two terms in the New Mexico Legislature. I met a gentleman from New Mexico about three years later and asked him if he knew Jim B—.

"Mighty well," was his reply.

"Is he as big a liar as he used to be, in a harmless sort of way?"

"No, indeed. He hasn't told a lie in three years."

"Well, what kind of miraculous power got hold of him?"

"Smallpox; and the poor devil never recovered."

As for the land agent-journalist, he doesn't impose on reporters nor lie by proxy any more. Being the editor and proprietor of a newspaper, he gives that department his personal attention.

But enough of this. In dealing with the history of Western Texas it is not necessary to invent or repeat fabrications. One can get all the reputation desired as a prevaricator by narrating

facts and sticking to the truth.

King Cotton's undisputed dominions now extend to the plains, and his advance forces are contending for mastery over that country from the foot of the plains to the banks of the Pecos River.

In 1876 the western limit of settlement in Texas was about two hundred miles west of Fort Worth. Beyond this limit there were only a few ranches, buffalo hunters, supply towns and Government posts. In 1881 the Texas and Pacific Railroad was completed from Fort Worth to El Paso, and the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad was completed from Fort Worth to Denver soon thereafter. The roads traversed the wilds of Western Texas and in no country was greater transformation ever wrought in a shorter time. What had but a short while previously been the range of the buffalo and the hunting ground of the Indian was now the theater of commercial activity. Town booms, real estate booms, cattle booms, sheep booms and buffalo bone booms made money plentiful, people extravagant and bred harvests of sorrow. Bureaus of information were formed and at a cost of vast sums, imagination labeled information was disseminated throughout the country. Insignificant towns were glowingly pictured as "queens of the prairies and cities of destiny," and the resources of the country were reputed "to rival, in real wealth, the riches of Golconda." Unreasonable theories were presented as demonstrated truths and absurd statements as ordinary facts. They were accepted literally with a foolish faith and a confidence born of expectations. People believed everything and questioned nothing. What the imagination pictured the mind was forced to accept as real. As a result of all this lavish expenditures and injudicious investments were made and thousands of dollars eventually lost. But this was due to no fault of the country, for there was virtue in its climate, merit in its soil and wealth in its resources. False means had been employed to populate the country and improper methods attempted to bring about its development. Demonstration should have preceded development and immigration should have been gradual instead of an immethodical rush and the people should have been educated by advice and experience and not misled by a contagious enthusiasm.

During 1881-2-3 there was a very heavy immigration into the Panhandle country and into the Central West as far as the Staked Plains. In those days the roads were literally lined with covered wagons—"going West to take up school land."

These "movers" represented every character and condition of the farming classes. There was the man who had sold his farm back East, and he generally had good teams, good wagons and some money. There was the poor renter with a big family, several dogs, a poor team and a rundown wagon, and scarcely enough money to pay for filing on a hundred and sixty acres of land, but all of them were sanguine and happy. They had found a country where the soil was rich, the climate unsurpassed, land cheap and terms easy, and effort alone was necessary to make them prosperous and independent. Few, if any of them, had gone ahead to select a place. They simply moved into the country and traveled until they found "something good" and took possession of it. These people had been accustomed to a country where it rained every week or two and where that amount of rain was necessary to make crops, and they knew nothing of the peculiarities of Western Texas in this respect; neither did they stop to consider that they were putting new land in cultivation and should expect nothing more than light crops the first year, with favorable seasons. Soon they were disappointed, disgusted and heartsick, for the rains had been few and the yields had been light. Then began the reaction and the tide of immigration turned its course backward. Thousands of people abandoned their claims, together with such improvements as they had placed thereon, and most of these claims were afterward sold for taxes and reverted to the State, for the land wasn't considered worth the taxes due on it. These abandonments were the most unnecessary, expensive and far-reaching mistakes ever made in the settlement of Western Texas.

Had these people understood the conditions with which they must contend and known how to plant and cultivate accordingly, instead of their adventure resulting so disastrously they could have now been as their first fancy pictured—happy, prosperous and independent. Such has been the experience and achievement of those who persevered, and what has been with them is no exception to what should reasonably have been the rule. What the early immigrants called a fearful drouth doesn't make the Western Texas farmer of today feel uneasy. There has scarcely been a year since 1881 that big crops could not have been made in Western Texas had the farmers only known what they now know. Last year was one of the driest years known in Western Texas, yet throughout nearly the entire country cotton yielded from a third to a half a bale per acre, and feed crops of all kinds were excellent.

With the reaction of the immigration movement in 1883 Western Texas became the innocent victim of a most unenviable reputation. Traducers found appreciative audiences, but those who praised or defended, appealed to deaf ears and found themselves catalogued with Annanias et al. Some of them got what they deserved, for if they told the truth it was accidental and unintentional, while others were martyrs for a country's cause. From 1883 until 1895 there was very little immigration into the country west of Taylor and Jones Counties, nor into the Panhandle country, but since 1895 no other portions of the State have had a greater increase in population or material development, nor enjoyed a higher degree of prosperity. Land has advanced in price from \$1 and \$2 per acre to \$7, and as high as \$25 per acre, and with the exception of the rough, arid, unwatered country west of the Pecos River, not a section of school land remains unoccupied. A great deal of it is leased by cattlemen for grazing purposes, over which there has been much bitter contention, litigation and legislation during recent years, the issue being drawn between the cattlemen and actual settlers.

One can spend a few weeks traveling over the plains country and a few other portions of Western Texas, and be convinced that there is still considerable breathing space left. In many instances ranch houses or the homes of actual settlers are ten or twelve miles apart, but the country is dotted with windmills and enclosed with wire fences. It seems a self-evident proposition that the country must become more thickly settled and give homes to a far greater number of people; but it is hoped that this change will continue to come about gradually and that the new condition will be permanent. Those who have learned should be teachers, and those who come should listen.

In sixty-two counties in Western Texas in 1900 there were twelve ranches having from 30,000 to 70,000 head of cattle, eight having from 8,000 to 20,000 head, forty-nine having from 3,000 to 7,000, and one hundred and seventy-four ranches having from 500 to 3,000 cattle, and this is exclusive of the X I T outfit, or syndicate ranch, which had more than 100,000 head of cattle. Since that time there has been some change in this order of things, notably with the X I T ranch, which has sold most, if not all, of its cattle and land in small allotments.

In addition to the changes which improvements have wrought, there have been at least two remarkable changes in the topography of the country. Many sections that were absolutely treeless fifteen or twenty years ago are now covered by a

heavy growth of mesquites. This is doubtless due to the fact that since the country has become settled and fenced and grass more valuable greater precautions have been taken to prevent prairie fires, which formerly, caused by carelessness or started by Indians, would sweep over the country, destroying everything of a destructible nature. The grass would quickly reappear, but the mesquites, being a slow-growing timber, would not more than get started until they would be destroyed again.

The killing of prairie dogs by the thousands has made another change in the appearance of the country. Where formerly hundreds of acres were covered by prairie dog towns not a burrow is now to be seen.

During recent years a great deal of money has been spent and considerable progress made in the matter of ridding the country of prairie dogs, wolves and jack rabbits, these measures being made necessary for the protection of the range and growing crops against the dogs and rabbits and to protect stock against the wolves. Most of the money has been spent and most of the results accomplished by individuals, although in 1891 the Legislature passed the State bounty law, which made it mandatory upon each county to pay a bounty of \$1 per dozen for prairie dog or jack rabbit scalps, \$1 each for coyote scalps and \$5 each for lobo scalps. At that time there were millions of prairie dogs and fully as many jack rabbits in Western Texas, and to avoid hopeless bankruptcy many counties defied the State and repudiated the bounty law, and the Legislature of 1893, realizing the absurdity of the law, repealed it.

Notwithstanding the activity and money expended in the work of extermination, there are yet millions of prairie dogs, a considerable number of coyotes and a few lobos, but the jack rabbit is rarely ever seen. At one time these rabbits were so numerous that they contributed in a great measure to preventing the growth of mesquites, for during the winter, when the grass was dead, and especially when the ground was covered with snow, they would gnaw all the bark off of the bushes. But in the winter of 1895 some kind of disease broke out among the rabbits and the species was almost exterminated throughout the western part of the State.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### TERRITORIAL CHANGES AND LAND LEGISLATION.

In 1876 what was then known as the territories of Young, Bexar and Tom Green Counties embraced a comparatively enormous scope of country, extending west to the Pecos River and the line of New Mexico and north to the Red River. West of the Pecos River were the counties of Brewster, Presidio, Pecos and El Paso, spreading over several thousand miles of isolated solitude, Government posts and Indian depredation grounds. It would be a difficult task to comprehensively define the boundaires of the territories of Tom Green, Bexar and Young. It was not a solid block of country including everything, for there were exceptions, and the meandering boundaries of these exceptions were more intricate than interesting, and I do not know of anything so important in the history of a deceased boundary line as to justify devoting any considerable space to its obituary. Tom Green County, or territory, as you may please to term it, extended from somewhere down in the vicinity of the Rio Grande north to the present line of the T. & P. railroad, and covered a scope of country a few hundred miles wide, nestled between the territory of Bexar and the Pecos River, and the rest of Western Texas, including a number of created but unorganized counties,

was under the dominion of Bexar and Young. Since 1883 twelve counties have been created out of Tom Green, and that county, including "Baker's Neck," is still considerably above the regulation size. West of the Pecos there have been no considerable number of territorial or physical changes. Reeves County was created out of Pecos County in 1883; Jeff Davis, Buchel and Foley out of Presidio in 1887, but the latter two were abolished in 1897 and made a part of Brewster; and Roy Bean, "dealer in spiritous liquors, Justice of the Peace and law west of the Pecos," has been transferred into the great beyond. The Legislature carved out the counties and made the territorial changes and held dominion over the same, but no such feeble human power could budge R. Bean. Nothing less powerful than Providence could do that. But finally "Roy," an interesting, amusing, unique, inimitable character, departed this life, leaving a world no worse because he had lived and many people sadder because he had died. His methods of administering justice offended a few, vexed some, but amused many and "gave universal satisfaction," especially when Roy was around. He achieved considerable prominence because of his peculiarities; originality and adaptability to handle any emergency that presented itself. He made, administered and interpreted his own jurisprudence, was guided by no statutory law and wasted no time on technicalities. He wrote no long, learned decisions—just handed them out extemporaneously when occasion required. Roy was Justice of the Peace a long time, but was not continuously elected. His friends played a joke on him once and elected another fellow; but Roy didn't complain or lament. He had a scheme that beat that kind of foolishness. He made some kind of trade with his successful opponent whereby that individual resigned and Roy was appointed to succeed him. Then R. Bean administered a little justice which had a lasting moral effect in his own behalf. He lay for the parties who had been the principals in the joke and one by one they fell by the wayside. For instance, one of them took some friends into Roy's place one day to set 'em up. The bill amounted to one dollar, the party had no change, so he handed Bean a twenty dollar bill. Bean put the bill in the drawer, said nothing, but went on about his business. After waiting a few minutes the customer remarked:

"Why don't you give me my change?"

"What change?" unconcernedly questioned Bean.

"That twenty dollars I gave you. My bill ain't but a dollar. I want my money and none of your foolishness."



"Glad you mentioned it. If you ain't in no particular hurry come around next spring, but if you're in a rush maybe I'll have time to consider the matter next week."

That riled the customer, and he proceeded to cuss Bean out. That was what Bean had calculated would happen, and when the party had gone for enough Bean called the court to order, got out his docket, the same being the book on which he kept his bar accounts, and fined the fellow nineteen dollars for using abusive language.

The original boundary lines of El Paso County alone remain intact, and that county now far outranks any other Texas county in size. In fact, it is so large that when it is sunup on the eastern boundary the people are just going to bed in El Paso City. I got this information from a man who lived in El Paso at the time he was talking to me, but I don't think he lives there now, for I understand that when the moral crusade struck that town he was one of the first vices that was run out. It is barely possible that the people of El Paso go to bed earlier now than they used to. But I can say, and substantiate the assertion with indisputable facts, that El Paso County still covers a vast scope of country, which may some day be subdivided into several properous, thickly populated counties, but El Paso County and destiny must settle this matter between them.

Out of the territories of Young and Bexar the legislature in 1856 created fifty-four counties, each county being named in honor of some distinguished though deceased Texan. At the time it was not safe to name anything in honor of a living statesman. He was too apt to bolt the party and thus dishonor his country and forfeit the right to have his name emblazoned on the school geographies and railroad maps. The civil and political status of the dead was permanently fixed, and there was no risk to run in dishing out distinction to their memories. Every man after whom a Texas county has been named is worthy of the veneration, esteem and respect of all generations, but some of the counties that have been named for them wouldn't indicate it. Besides this is a case where inequality is liable to give inferiority the best of it, for the reason that a scope of cacti, sand desert and salt grass thirty miles square may perpetuate the name of some illustrious statesman and public benefactor, while the same sized scope of fertile valleys and productive prairies may make illustrious some pre-eminently successful horse trader and ex-member of a vigilance commit-

tec. Maybe the legislature knew what it was doing when it named the fifty-four counties created in 1876, but if so that was the only feature of the case with which it was familiar. The names suit me all right, and if the counties had to be named after persons the legislature probably did the proper thing. To have named them after living persons might have resulted adversely for various reasons. First, the men so honored might have gone to the bad as I have suggested; and second, to have thus honored fifty-four distinguished living Texans might have irreparably offended fifty thousand others, jealous of their own importance and ambitious for everything justly coming to them.

The fifty-four counties created by the legislature of 1876 are at present bounded on the south by the T. P. railroad, on the north by Oklahoma and on the west by New Mexico. It is a scope of country five counties wide and ten counties long, the extra four counties being accounted for by the difference in the average size. It is about one hundred and fifty miles from the eastern to the western limit of this tier of counties and about three hundred miles from the northern to the southern limit. The creating act specified that the counties should be blocked off on the map in the land office and that each county should be a certain number of miles square. The curvature of the earth was overlooked in this calculation and the result is, that the northern line is about two miles shorter than the southern line. This slight error didn't change the geography of the earth except to the extent of putting several thousand acres of Texas out of existence. It is about the first, but the most insignificant mistake the legislature has made in tampering with land matters in Western Texas. This mistake merely knocked off slice two miles wide at the north line out of Dallam County.

In 1876 the legislature passed a law entitled an act to encourage the construction of railroads. This law donated sixteen sections of land for every mile of railroad completed and operated in accordance with certain provisions. I haven't at command the records showing how much land was thus acquired by the railroad companies, but it was an enormous quantity. Most of this land was located throughout Western Texas, the principal portion of it in the fifty-four counties created by the fifteenth legislature, and consisted of every alternate section of the then unappropriated public domain. It is doubtless well that this generosity in the matter of encouragement did not continue indefinitely, and to the equal benefit of all railroads. There are now approximately twelve thousand miles of railway in Texas,

and sixteen sections per mile would make a total of 192,000 sections or 122,880,000 acres; to this add say six millions of old land grants and three million acres given the syndicate for building the capitol and we have a fraction of over 206,082 section or 131,880,000 acres. In a county thirty miles square there are 900 sections or 5,760,000 acres. Thus we find that it would have taken 229 counties each, thirty miles square, for the State to have liquidated its real estate indebtedness to the railroads, old grants and capitol syndicate. There are about 269 counties in the State, a majority of them less than thirty miles square; therefore, Texas wouldn't have any more roads than it has because the encouragement fund would have been exhausted and there wouldn't have been enough public domain left to buy a sidewalk franchise from the capitol building to the intersection of the first street. However, a great many of the principal railways in Texas were not beneficiaries of the Legislature's encouraging generosity. But when we take into consideration the manner in which the public lands have been handled by the powers that be and have been, the wisdom of donating the land to railroads becomes a consolation. The railroad lands have been sold at reasonable prices, and instances of litigation have been very few. Had the State managed its land as judiciously as the railroads have it could have owned the railroads and in addition thereto have been the richest commonwealth in the world.

In 1879 the legislature passed the first land law of any material consequence in so far as Western Texas was particularly concerned. This law provided that actual settlers could take up one section of arable land or three sections of grazing land, the price to be fixed by appraisalment, payable in ten years at ten per cent. The terms and rate of interest were the objectionable features. Poor people could not make the payments nor stand such a high rate of interest.

In 1881 the legislature passed what it termed an amendment to the act of 1879, but this was incorrect. It was a mistake instead of an amendment. The act of 1881 is what is known as the seven section act. It provided that the public school land could be taken up in bodies ranging anywhere from 160 acres to seven sections, and made no kind of distinction between actual settlers, citizens of the State and non-residents. This was a harmful piece of legislation and resulted in far reaching and deplorable consequences. For instance, a speculator from Chi-

cago immediately appeared in Western Texas and in the name of himself and fifty-seven alleged relatives, father, mother, wife, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins ad infinitum, filed on 406 sections or 259,840 acres of the finest land in Western Texas. Within a few weeks after the land had been awarded to him, his heirs, uncles and aunts, he sold it to two big cattle syndicates for \$2.50 per acre, thus paying the State \$1 per acre and having a net profit of \$389,760. Not a dollar of this profit was invested in Texas, and scarcely an acre of the land thus disposed of has been put in cultivation, while all around it are fine farms, good improvements and well developed land. Such incidents were common and the result is now glaringly apparent.

The Legislature of 1883 created the land board, composed of the Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller, Treasurer and Land Commissioner, took all school lands off the market for ninety days as an emergency act; then classified the land as dry grazing land, at \$2 per acre; watered land, at \$3.50 per acre; good timbered land, at \$5 per acre, and poor timbered land at \$2 per acre to be sold to actual settlers only, in quantities of not more than one watered or agricultural section and six additional sections of dry grazing land where the land board deemed this necessary or expedient, the purchase price payable in thirty years at eight per cent. The act furthermore provided that all unused land might be leased at four cents per acre, all leases being subject to sale to actual settlers. The price and interest were a little high, in so far as the welfare of the actual settler was concerned, but this was doubtless the best land law ever placed on the statute books of Texas. But subsequent legislatures had to do some validating.

In 1887 the land board was abolished and increased powers were delegated to the Land Commissioner. The Land Commissioner was empowered to sell to actual settlers only at \$2 and \$3 per acre, and parties who had formerly taken one section only were permitted to file on three additional sections. The lease law was changed some, providing that the lease should be for a specified term of five years at 4c per acre, the lease on the strictly grazing land to be permanent during this term, but the agricultural land to be subject to actual settlement at any time.

In 1891 the Legislature got very busy in the real estate business. It passed the noted and still existing alien land law, validated some more of the land board's acts, and enacted a more extensive lease law. This lease law provided that all public

schools lands west of the Pecos River and south of the T. & P. Railroad, except in the counties of Concho, McCullough, Coke, Sterling, Glasscock, Midland, Ector, Tom Green, Howard and Martin, should be leased for a period of ten years at four cents per acre; and that all lands north of the T. & P. Railroad and Colorado River and in the counties enumerated should be leased for a term of five years at four cents. The agricultural lands within the ten year lease district was subject to sale to actual settlers as were all lands in the five year district, but the purchaser was obligated to put thereon improvements to the amount of \$100 within six months after the land had been awarded to him.

In 1895 the Legislature passed what is known as the absolute lease law. This law covered fourteen pages of the statute and several million acres of Western Texas. Out of this law grew more litigation and strife than an international peace congress could adjudicate. It produced the collusionist and bounty jumper and deterred the honest settler. To get possession of a piece of school land within the absolute lease district meant a scramble and a lawsuit, occupations for which the collusionist and bounty jumper were especially equipped. There was no trouble about the title to the land, but as to which of the two should secure it. Neither of them was entitled to it, but one or the other of them always got it.

In 1901 the Legislature passed a law that was considerable improvement over the law of 1895, but it was not an absolute perfection of conditions by any means, for the war whoops of collusionists and bounty jumpers still disturb the serenity of the West occasionally, and the manner of filing on land when it comes on the market by reason of some lease having expired is productive of much evil.

There is no considerable amount of public land left at the present and a few years more will relieve the State of this quantity. Then there will be nothing to do but collect taxes and watch the country develop, an occupation that has been growing popular and more extensive for several years.



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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CONCERNING TAYLOR COUNTY.

By an act of the legislature February 1st, 1858, Taylor County was created out of the territories of Bexar and Travis counties, and was organized by an election held for that purpose July 3rd, 1878. From the time the county was created until organized it was attached to the following counties for judicial purposes: To Young county until 1860, to Comanche county from 1860 until 1870, to Palo Pinto county from 1870 until 1875, to Shackelford county during 1875, to Eastland county from 1875 until organized.

In 1872 or 1873 Carter & Grounds moved a herd of about three thousand cattle from Shackelford county and located in Mulberry Canyon, and this was perhaps the first permanent location made by any one within the confines of Taylor county. About the same time the Dunn ranch was established on the Jim Ned; the Hash Knife ranch, owned by J. B. Simpson, was established on Cedar, near where the town of Abilene now stands, and G. H. Connell and Brooks Lee established a ranch near where Buffalo Gap now stands. The Dunn ranch was first managed by Sam Gholson, afterwards by T. B. Cross, and the Connell & Lee ranch was managed by P. P. Clark. There is some controversy as to the priority of location of these ranches, but as that is a matter of no material concern no attempt will be made here to substantiate or refute any one's contention. I do not care to settle disputes or

cause trouble, my raging desire being to tell the truth or something so closely allied to it that no one will ever know the difference.

The information contained in this article was obtained mostly from M. C. Lambeth, who came here with Carter & Grounds, was employed by them until the county was organized, when he was elected county clerk and served in that capacity until in 1882, and who has ever since been closely identified with the county and is thoroughly familiar with its history.

About 1875 a few families located in the vicinity of Buffalo Gap, among them being Abe Hunter, Dick Koen, Jep Clayton, Jim Cooksey and John Hay. Hunter put in a small stock of groceries at his residence, and this was the first mer-

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FURNITURE.

Paxton's Old Stand, Pine Street, Abilene, Texas.

cantile establishment of any kind in the county. In 1876 Rodney Knight, representing a firm in Brownwood, established a store about three-fourths of a mile south of where Buffalo Gap now stands, and W. K. Ray soon thereafter put in a stock of general merchandise in the same vicinity. By 1878 Buffalo Gap had grown to be a frontier town of considerable importance, and by 1880 it was the uncrowned queen of the woolly west. In other words Buffalo Gap was a warm number. It boasted a population of fully twelve hundred, and there were only three vacant lots facing the public square. It was cattlemen's headquarters for all this section of country, and its trade territory extended for many miles in every direction. No attempt had been made to boom the town or

build a city. It had simply come into existence as a necessity and had prospered as a natural consequence, and while the town was yet in its infancy it looked as though destiny was going to make it the adopted child of fortune. The route of the T. & P. railway was surveyed westward from Fort Worth. This survey passed directly through the town of Belle Plain, in Callahan county, and thence through Buffalo Gap, but the surveyors went a few miles west of the Gap, got tangled up with the mountains and solved the problem by abandoning the route and surveying another one fourteen miles to the north, Abilene was established

And Buffalo Gap was nevermore  
What it had been some months before.

In 1883 an election was held for the purpose of determining whether or not the county seat should be moved from Buffalo Gap to Abilene. This resulted in one of the most hotly contested elections ever pulled off in any country. In this contest Abilene had many essential advantages. It had plenty of money, it had up-to-date politicians, and it had direct railroad connections with the floating population of Baird, Sweetwater, Colorado and Big Springs. It is remarkable the

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The West Texas Hardware Jobbers, Abilene, Texas.

The oldest and most extensive Hardware Firm in Western Texas.

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interest those people took in the Taylor county county seat contest. They chartered freight trains and made holiday rate excursions to Abilene. It has been rumored that Buffalo Gap got buncoed in this matter, and in view of the fact that there were only about five hundred voters in the county at that time and that more than eight hundred votes were cast in Abilene alone on that occasion, there is at least foundation for the rumor to which reference is above made. So firmly was Buffalo Gap convinced that non-residents to the number of far more than enough to move the county seat had been converted into bona fide citizens between sun-up and six o'clock that they proposed to raise a shotgun battalion and raise a rough house if necessary. In substance they were not going to permit the removal of the records from Buffalo Gap to Abilene. But there were some rough house specialists in Abilene about that time and they went over to Buffalo Gap to see about it. Excitement ran up to something like 243 in the shade. Serious trouble was narrowly averted and an armistice was declared pending a judicial determination of the matter, and as diplomacy and the courts were in favor of Abilene the matter was finally determined in a manner entirely satisfactory to the latter.

While Buffalo Gap was a typical western town, its history is remarkably free of the bloody records made by most towns of that class. Its history abounds in the rich, rare and amusing and contains but little of the tragic. A few instances will serve best to illustrate.

The first killing that took place in Taylor county was down on the Jim Ned, and it has never been fully determined whether this tragedy took place in Callahan or Taylor county. It seems that a certain party had located on the Jim Ned, bringing with him into this country a few hundred cattle and several hundred kinds of reputation. His cattle were common scrubs but they were thoroughbreds compared with his reputation. Associated with this party was a fellow who

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#### OVER HARDWARE COMPANY,

We handle nothing but the best of everything in the Hardware Vehicle,  
Implement and Machinery Line, Because it pays in two  
ways--our profits are no less and our customers  
are a great deal better satisfied, and  
stay with us.

Chestnut Street,

Abilene, Texas.

devoted too much of his time to talking in a careless, off-hand, indifferent sort of manner. One morning this talking man was out in the cowpen. He was also in the cowpen about sundown. He had been there all day. He would probably have left there early in the morning, but in those days it was not customary for a man to go walking around with his body all full of bullet holes. Excitement ran high and there was some talk of arresting the fellow who had done the shooting, but he sent the authorities word to go on about their business and that he would come in and surrender when he got ready. Finally he got ready, but he did so in a most elaborate military manner. He armed his whole outfit and entered the town more on the order of a conquering hero than a trembling criminal. He hunted up the justice of the peace and announced that he was ready for trial, but after taking the matter under careful consideration the justice of the peace held that he had no jurisdiction in the premises, whereupon Mr. Shooter transferred the case on his own motion to the county court, and the county court declared that the defendant was not guilty and should go hence without day, and he did the same.

They used to have a county judge over there who was something of a character himself. He was always sober enough to hold court. One day he was qualifying a jury, and he asked them the usual question, to-wit: "I say, (hic) can you fellers, (hic) all read and write. You needn't anshur thad queshun (hic) though, for (hic) if you couldn't I guess you'd be 'shamed to tell it."

The first term of district court held in the county was held under some shade trees. J. R. Flemming was district judge and the term of court lasted about fifteen or twenty minutes, for which purpose the court had traveled more than fifty miles overland.

The cowboys got so rollicky that the State Rangers were sent out there to hold things down while the court was in

EUGENE WOOD & COMPANY,

REAL ESTATE AND RENTAL AGENTS.

FIRE, LIFE, ACCIDENT AND TORNADO INSURANCE.

Pine Street, Abilene, Texas.

session. That was great sport for the cowpunchers. A bunch of them would get on one side of town, fire their pistols and then tear away with the rangers in pursuit. They would scatter out and of course the rangers would return empty handed, only to find that while they were absent another bunch of cowpunchers had been shooting up the town in great shape. One day a lawyer from Belle Plain, who was afterwards well known throughout the state, passed among a bunch of imbibing punchers and jokingly remarked: "Shoot 'em up boys and if you need any help remember that I am a lawyer." There were some rangers present and they immediately arrested the lawyer for inciting a disturbance. They

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## MINTER DRY GOODS COMPANY,

ABILENE'S MOST POPULAR AND PROGRESSIVE

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didn't put him in jail. There wasn't any jail, but they took him down to the ranger camp and chained him to a stump. His fine was thirty some odd dollars, which his friends, the cowpunches paid, touchingly reminding the lawyer that if he got into any more trouble as a result of shooting off his mouth to remember that they were cowpunchers.

The first plank house was built in Buffalo Gap in 1879, the lumber being hauled from Fort Worth and the freight bill alone was \$3.90 per hundred pounds. The house was 16x30

## P. H. HAMMOCK,

The man who sells the kind of Furniture found only in

FIRST-CLASS STORES.

Chestnut Sreet,

Abilene, Texas.

feet, was built by M. C. Lambeth, and was for more than four years used for a county court house, being leased to the county for that purpose.

Just before the first election of county officers all the candidates and nearly the entire population of the county met at a big barbecue and blowout on one prong of the Jim Ned. Some one smuggled a bottle of Hockstadter Bitters into the midst of the festivities and there came near being a riot, but I have never learned whether the trouble was started by those who drank the bitters or by those who didn't get any.

While the county seat was at Buffalo Gap a 16x30 frame building, to which reference has already been made, served as the court house, but the jail was a far more substantial and imposing structure, being a two-story stone building which is still standing, and now used as a lodge hall by the Masons and perhaps other secret organizations. I do not know just why the county erected a jail far superior to the court house, unless it was due to a little occurrence sometime before the jail was built. It seems that the jail at that time was a cedar log concern. A fellow killed a bona fide resident of the county and they put him in jail for it, and as a precautionary measure a guard was stationed in the door. The prisoner went to sleep as the guard supposed and the facts would indicate that the guard either went to sleep or somewhere else. At any rate when day dawned it dawned upon the guard that something had been doing during the night. The prisoner was gone. He hadn't gone out at the door, however. He

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Boots and Shoes and Gent's Furnishings. The Famous  
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Pine Street,

Abilene, Texrs.

had scratched the clinks out of the wall near the bed and disappeared, and he has never been seen nor heard of since.

There has been only one legal execution in Taylor county, and the crime for which the man was executed was committed in Comanche county, where the fellow killed his wife. He was first tried in that county, and was given the death penalty, but Judge Connor, the trial judge, granted a new trial, owing to the fact that it developed that one of the jurors had declared before being empaneled that if permitted to sit on the jury he would fix the defendant, or had uttered words in substance meaning the same. The case was then transferred to Taylor county and resulted in a second conviction with a death penalty attachment.

Away back in ye olden days a colored individual got tangled up with a rope and died of strangulation before relief could reach him. This was up in Mulberry Canyon, and it has never been definitely ascertained just what kind of devilment the negro had been into. It is very evident that he got into some very serious trouble in so far as he was individually concerned.

One of the most amusing things incident with the history of Taylor county was a journalistic escapade, if such it may be termed. Dr. A. H. H. Tolar had for several months been editing the Colorado Clipper, and he had built up a reputation as a boomer and climatic condition prevaricator that has never been excelled. The Doctor was a character and a man that everybody liked. Finally the Doctor sold out in Colorado and moved to Abilene and became editor of the Reporter.

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ABILENE DRY GOODS COMPANY,

An Institution Firmly Established and Made Popular by  
proper Business Methods.

Pine Street,

Abilene, Texas.



# ABILENE DRUG COMPANY,

Handles everything people need and can get at first-class  
Drug Stores only.

South Chestnut Street,

Abilene, Texas.

Now, while the Doctor was in Colorado City he was often wont to burlesque Abilene in his own inimitable style, which he did somewhat thusly: Mr. A, of Abilene would go to Colorado, and the Doctor would meet him or otherwise learn that he had been in his town, and the next issue of the Clipper would contain a local notice something like this:

"Mr. A, a prominent citizen of a small town near Clyde, or just east of Trent, was in Colorado yesterday. He is seriously contemplating moving to Colorado City for the school and social advantages and to engage in business."

When the Doctor moved to Abilene of course he had to change front on this burlesquing business, and he did it with a beautiful ease. For instance the first issue of the Reporter after he became editor contained a salutatory something like this:

"We trust our many readers will be charitable toward us because of the many shortcomings in this issue of the Reporter. For many months we have been used to life in a quiet little country village situated on the banks of that lonesome stream, the Colorado river, and we have become entirely estranged from the hustle and bustle of a thriving city. The rumbling of street cars and the rattling of carriages are unusual sounds to our ears and we are naturally in a state of considerable confusion and perturbation, but of course we will soon become accustomed to the new condition of things—the ways of metropolitan life—and will then be able to give our numerous patrons a more efficient service."

Taylor county, like the balance of Western Texas, was

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146 South Chestnut Street, Abilene, Texas.

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strictly a cattle ranching country until about 1887. In fact, no farming efforts of any consequence were attempted in the county until about 1890. It was during this era that Abilene enjoyed its share of spectacular cow-day glory, and few, if any towns, ever did a more thriving business in that specialty. There is only one great deficiency in Abilene's history in this respect. It didn't average up with competing towns in the matter of daily or weekly killings. The oldtime cowpuncher pined and longed and sighed to go where he could get killed in case of an emergency, and Abilene's failure to provide proper accommodations of this character resulted in the loss of a great amount of cowpuncher trade. The trouble here was that the city and county officers always stood in with the law-abiding element, and when some enterprising bold, bad man would come here and open negotiations with a view to establishing a private cemetery he was liable to be arrested. Of course, public sentiment didn't permit the officers to go too far in this matter. As long as a man behaved himself he was in no danger of official interference. For instance, if a man wanted to get drunk and whoop a few times and then go out in the rear of some saloon and take a few shots at the solar system there was no special objection to his doing so, and at one time there were more than a dozen saloons where he could get drunk, and fully as many places where he could stroll out the back way and fall over some beer kegs and shoot at the solar system or some other inanimate object. If he wanted to play a few hundred at poker, faro, roulette, monte or craps all he had to do was to take his choice of sev-

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## WILL STITH &amp; CO.,

REAL ESTATE AND RENTAL AGENTS. LIFE, FIRE, TORNADO

AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE.

## THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF MERKEL,

Merkel, Texas.

The Largest Capitalized Bank in Taylor County. The Oldest  
Bank in Merkel.

Geo. S. Berry, President.

R. M. Barnes, Cashier.

eral different wide open places and gratify his desires, but he was not supposed to try to beat four aces with one pair, one of them a deuce and the other a six-shooter, as an officer was liable to appear and arrest him for carrying concealed weapons. When a confirmed victim of the killing habit began to feel that he could live but a short while longer unless he killed some one it was bad politics for him to inaugurate a three or four days reign of terror, hypnotize the officers to skeedaddle and scare all the other bad men into nervous prostration, for he would not be able to more than outline his policy and make a brief declaration of intentions until he would find it necessary to postpone operations until he could at least make bond. In those days there were lots of men around Abilene who were not "afraid of the devil." If they had been they would have probably reformed before it was too late. Once and awhile two or more of them would entertain conflicting views in regard to poker etiquette or some other commercial proposition. The exchange of opinions would be very brief and precise. Entirely too much so, in fact, to be appreciated by the by-standers. When two men are going to take a few shots at one another I like for them to talk the matter over long enough for me to go out and lean up against the opposite of some brick wall.

Abilene, like every Western Texas town, had its great boom, but unlike most western towns it is today a better town than it was during the town boom era, for the simple reason that the country has developed to an extent that it will sup-

J. L. McDAVID,

General Dealer in

GROCERIES, GRAIN AND COUNTRY PRODUCE.

J. P. Wooten's old stand, South Second Street, Abilene, Texas.

port the town though it was built in advance of the sustaining capacity of the country of several years ago. While there was once a considerable conflict between the livestock and agricultural interests, it was of comparatively short duration, and since 1890 the history of Taylor county is the simple story of permanent, uninterrupted progress, and it is a considerable distance of time back to the days of romance and western rollicksomeness in Abilene or Taylor county. Abilene and Merkel are today the most prosperous and progressive towns in Western Texas, and they are sustained by a thickly settled country which less than twenty years ago was scarcely inhabited.

Twenty-five years ago Merkel was not a town in human contemplation, and if Abilene was any further advanced it was merely in the mind of Colonel Berry, the founder of the town. He might have been cogitating and contemplating what he was going to undertake in the matter of starting Abilene, but if so he had confided his plans to no one. Buffalo Gap was then a thriving town, "the commercial metropolis of the west," but it is today a sad reminder of the cruel fate of commercialism, the inscrutableness of destiny, a quiet country hamlet, nestling in a picturesque locality, resigned to the misfortunes by fate decreed. But Buffalo Gap can now, and perhaps forever, boast a monopoly of the picnic business in Taylor county. Man may build towns and move county seats and construct railroads, but he can't walk off with an ideal picnic ground.

#### COUNTY AND CITY OFFICERS FROM 1878 TO THE PRESENT.

Following is a list of men who have served in various capacities as county officials, together with a list of the men who have served as city officials in the town of Abilene:

County Judges:—J. W. Drury served from the time the county was organized, July 3rd, 1878, until the general election which took place the following November. Then came

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Ed. S. Hughes, President.

Henry James, Cashier.

J. M. Canningham, Vice-President.

W. R. Keeble, Ass't. Cash.

#### THE FARMERS AND MERCHANTS NATIONAL BANK

THE OLDEST BANK IN TAYLOR COUNTY.

Capital and Surplus, \$120,000.

E. P. Beauchamp, then Luke Matthews, and then D. B. Corley, who was appointed and served but a very short time. Then came John W. Murray, H. A. Porter, D. G. Hill, C. M. Christenberry, who died after serving a short while and was succeeded by D. G. Hill, the present incumbent.

District Clerks:—Bill Isaacs, D. G. Russell and W. C. Cheatham were the first district clerks in the county. About 1881 this office was consolidated with that of county clerk and so remained until 1902 when the offices were again severed, V. F. Womack and the present incumbent, W. J. Young, since filling the position.

County Clerks:—Only three men have filled this position, M. C. Lambeth, D. J. Red and the present incumbent, S. H. Garrison.

Sheriffs:—Jim Carter was the first sheriff, serving from July 3rd, 1878, until November following, when John Mann was elected. J. V. Cunningham was elected to succeed Mann, but resigned before his term expired, and W. H. Lemmons was appointed to succeed him. Lemmons was elected to succeed himself, but resigned and K. V. Northerington was appointed to succeed him. J. V. Cunningham was elected to succeed Northerington, and was continuously reelected until 1886, when he was not a candidate and H. B. Cook was elected. Cook served one term, when Cunningham was again elected and still fills the position.

County Attorneys:—This office has been filled by Mr. Shertliff, Frank Hamilton, M. A. Spoons, T. A. Henry, John Nabors, D. G. Hill, S. P. Hardwicke, J. M. Wagstaff, A. S. Hardwicke, T. A. Bledsoe and the present incumbent, W. B. Lewis.

County Treasurers:—This office has been filled by C. P. Gamble, T. O. Anderson, Geo. W. Witt, J. P. Daniel, and J. H. Thornton, the present incumbent.

Tax Assessor:—This office has been filled by A. Whitehurst, M. W. Northerington, Thomas Knouse, John Neill, J.

## BOONE-MUELLER HARDWARE COMPANY,

Hardware, Farm Implements, Vehicles and Machinery of all kinds.

Corner North 2nd, and Pine Street, Abilene, Texas.

W. H. Eddleman, Pres. W. G. Swenson, V-P. Geo. L. Paxton, Cashier

## THE CITIZENS NATIONAL BANK,

Abilene, Texas.

CAPITAL, - - - - - \$75,000.

### DIRECTORS:

W. H. Eddleman, of the Western National Bank, Fort Worth.  
 Geo. L. Paxton, C. P. Warren, W. G. Swenson, P. H. Hammock,  
 J. M. Wagstaff, G. W. Parks, F. F. Elkins, S. N. Morrison.

W. Christopher, and the present incumbent, C. C. Jackson.

**Tax Collector:**—The sheriff was also tax collector until 1902, when the offices were severed and Baylor Crawford, the present incumbent, was elected.

**County Surveyors:**—This office has been filled by Lymon Strickland, H. M. Henderson, J. A. Thomas, and the present incumbent, W. A. Riney. Capt. L. C. Wise was elected to this office in 1886, but he was not really a candidate for the position and never qualified.

**Hide and Animal Inspectors:**—John Waddell, Jack Gilstrap, John Neill, John Northerington, Drew Middleton, Elbert Roberts, Ross Hall and Joe Coil. This was at one time one of the best offices in the county, but its importance and remunerative features passed away with the cattle business, and the office was abolished by the last legislature.

**Public Weigher (for the Abilene district):**—This office has been filled by Tom Cole, John Harkrider, and the present incumbent, M. A. Hart.

**Mayors of the town of Abilene:**—D. B. Corley, J. A. Kirkland, D. W. Wristen, H. A. Porter. D. W. Wristen was again elected, and then came A. M. Robertson, John Bowyer, F. C. Digby-Roberts, Capt. R. W. Ellis, and the present incumbent, Morgan Weaver.

**City Marshals of Abilene:**—T. J. Hill, W. A. George, and the present incumbent, J. J. Clinton

**City Attorneys:**—D. G. Hill was the first city attorney, then came D. G. Chalmers, who was succeeded by T. J. Willis. D. G. Hill was again elected in 1888. The office was afterwards filled by John A. Williams, R. C. Joiner, A. S.

Hardwicke, John H. Morrow, T. A. Bledsoe, W. T. Wilson, and the present incumbent, Bruce E. Oliver.

City Secretary:—This office was filled by W. G. Swanson until it was consolidated with the office of assessor and collector, about 1892.

Assessors and Collectors:—W. J. Thompson, W. S. O. Johnson, John Hampton, Captain Pickens, and the present incumbent, J. W. Christopher.

Treasurers:—J. C. Lackland, J. G. Lowden, Ed. S. Hughes, Geo. C. Harris, George S. Berry, W. J. Thompson, E. H. Boone, and the present incumbent, J. R. Spaulding.

